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76

## THE BLACK GHETTO:

### THE HISTORY OF BLACK NEWARK, 1917-1967

"Does Lincoln get that soon?"

July 4, 1976

To my mom and dad,  
my first history teachers.

Thomas Allan McCabe

A thesis  
presented to Princeton University  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Bachelor of Arts  
in the  
Department of History

Princeton, New Jersey, 1991

(c) Thomas McCabe, 1991

СТИХИЮ ВЫДАЕТ

ЧИТАЮЩИЙ КОЛЛЕГИУМ ПО ТЕХНИКЕ ИМ.

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и в искусстве  
и в быту

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## Acknowledgments

During the course of "Does Lincoln get shot soon?" I have debts that I can ever hope to repay. I am especially grateful to the New Jersey Reference Room at the Newark Public Library, for they have aided me at every stage of this project.

July 4, 1976

To my mom and dad,  
Likewise, I am indebted to Mrs. Wein Minkel, for her careful readings of this manuscript. Her guidance has made the difference.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge Kian Moranghi and Kian McColl, the families I love so well. Thanks for all your love and care. I hope you enjoy my "book report."

"Yours with very sincere regards"  
John R. Green

John R. Green  
yours very truly yours

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## Acknowledgments

During the course of this study I have learned more than I can ever hope to realize. I am especially grateful to all those in the New Zealand Religious Board in the New Zealand Public Trusts, for their great help to this project.

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For five days in July 1967, Newark, New Jersey was the battlefield for a city's race war. On the first night of the "war," residents of the Hayes Homes, high-rise apartments in the heart of the black ghetto, buried Molotov cocktails at the local police

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On July 12, 1967, Newark's black ghetto erupted in a violent rage. On July 12, after leaving the riot-torn black ghetto, Governor Richard Hughes decided that "the line between the jungle and the law might as well be drawn [in Newark] as any place in America." He ordered the National Guard and State Police to mobilize their forces against the band of black guerrillas. Armored vehicles cruised the ghetto streets; machine guns isolated the war zone. Snipers, perched on rooftops, fired sporadically. Fireworks blazed by day, projected images of *Armageddon* by night. As the fury of the city continued to burn, Mayor Hugh Addonizio lamented: "It is all gone, the whole town is

Nine hundred and sixty seven, the number of black discontent, witnessed the coming of age of Newark's black community. The year marked a significant turning

## Topics of Conference

1. ~~Organization: The City of Memphis: from Rura to Metropolization~~
2. ~~Citizen Power: The Road to Representation~~
3. ~~Chicanos: The Second Coming: Rubber in the Sunshine Land~~
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6. ~~Propaganda~~

## Introduction

For five days in July 1967, Newark, New Jersey was the battlefield for a city's race war. On the first night of the "war," residents of the Hayes Homes, high-rise apartments in the heart of the black ghetto, hurled Molotov cocktails at the local police precinct in protest of the brutal beating of a black cab driver. After the barrage had ceased, the police, equipped with helmets and nightsticks, surged out of their headquarters, and began attacking the rebellious mob. Eventually, the crowd dispersed. It was the quiet before the storm.

Over the next four days the city's black ghetto erupted in a violent rage. On July 14, after touring the riot-torn black ghetto, Governor Richard Hughes decided that "the line between the jungle and the law might as well be drawn [in Newark] as any place in America."<sup>1</sup> He ordered the National Guard and State Police to mobilize their forces against the band of black guerrillas. Armored vehicles cruised the ghetto streets. Barricades isolated the war zone. Snipers, perched on rooftops, fired sporadically. Fires which blazed by day, projected images of Armageddon by night. As the fury of the city continued to burn, Mayor Hugh Addonizio lamented: "It is all gone, the whole town is gone."<sup>2</sup>

Nineteen hundred and sixty seven, the summer of black discontent, witnessed the coming of age of Newark's black community. The riots marked a significant turning

<sup>1</sup>*New York Daily News*, July 15, 1967.

<sup>2</sup>*Newark Evening News*, July 15, 1967.

## Introduction

This study aims to analyze the new version of the *Wörterbuch der Höheren Sprachwissenschaft* (HSS) from the perspective of the history of lexicography. The new edition of the *Wörterbuch der Höheren Sprachwissenschaft* (HSS) was published in 1923 by the *Verlag von F. De Gruyter* in Berlin. It is the second edition of the *Wörterbuch der Höheren Sprachwissenschaft*, which was first published in 1903. The new edition of the *Wörterbuch der Höheren Sprachwissenschaft* (HSS) was published in 1923 by the *Verlag von F. De Gruyter* in Berlin. It is the second edition of the *Wörterbuch der Höheren Sprachwissenschaft*, which was first published in 1903.

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point in the history of the country's third oldest city. The highly politicized post-riot black community hosted the first Black Power Conference in 1968. Two years later, in 1970, Kenneth Gibson became Newark's first black mayor.

The impact of the riots of the 1960's, although significant, has too often been overestimated. Racial riots, in reality, are the outward manifestation of frustration and dissatisfaction; they are fleeting moments in the context of a much larger struggle. Arnold R. Hirsch, from the vantage point of 1983, stated: "As the riots of the 1960's receded into the past and the grim fascination cooled, it became increasing[ly] clear that interracial confrontation. . . was just an occasional and spectacular manifestation of a deeper struggle."<sup>3</sup> As the Newark riots have faded into memory, the "deeper" and more lasting struggle of the city's black population between 1917 and 1967 has become more apparent. The intent of this study, then, is to resurrect the history of Black Newark before 1967, and to place this pre-riot period into its proper historical perspective.

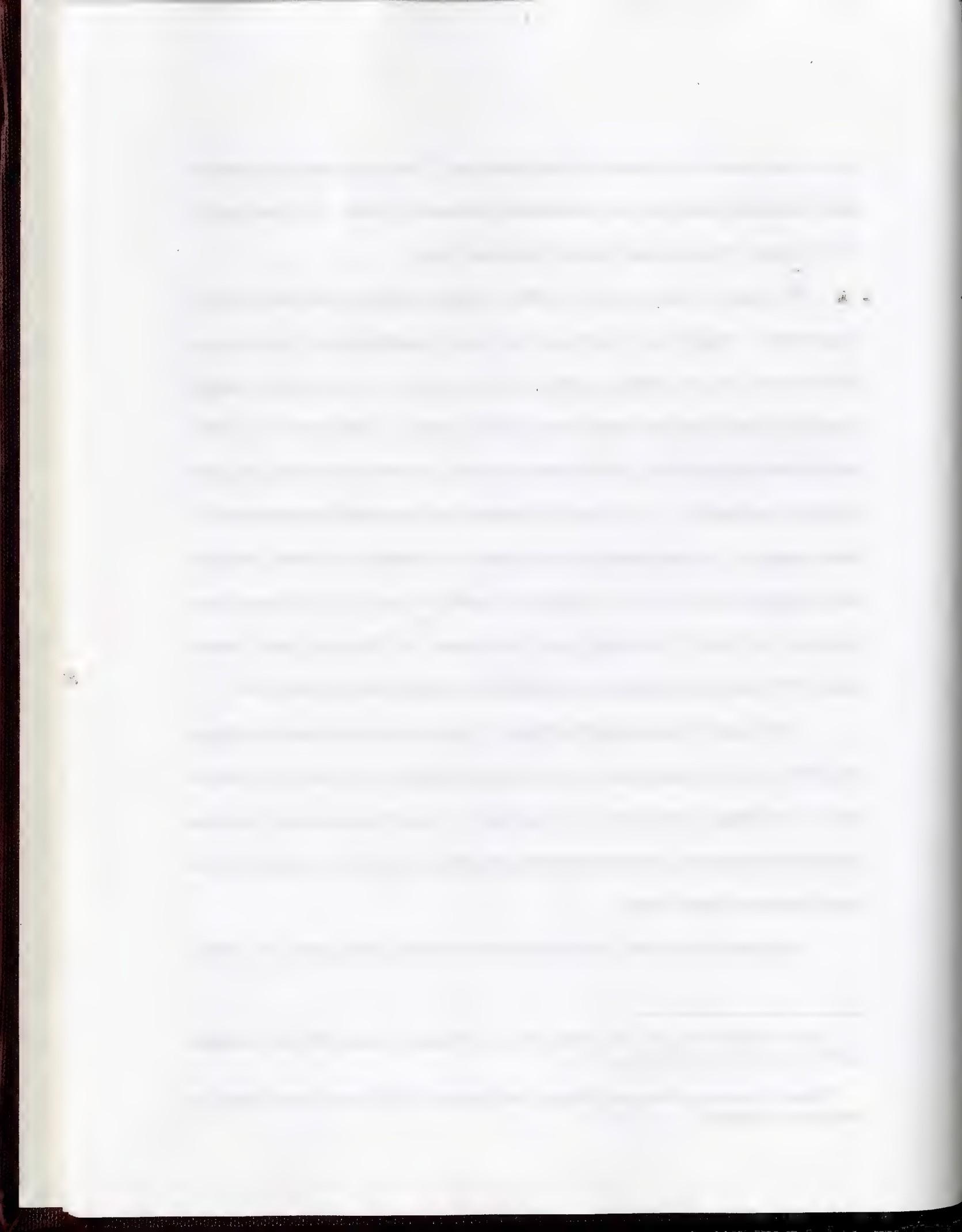
Urban history was dramatically effected by the upheaval in American cities during the 1960's. As race riots ceased their tour of the country, scholars sought to find the roots of the modern urban crisis. To make sense of the urban crisis some historians studied political history, some devoted their attention to the history of reform, and still others focused on black history.<sup>4</sup>

The unrest of the 1960's focused attention upon the black ghettos of northern

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<sup>3</sup>Arnold R. Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto: Race and Housing in Chicago, 1940-1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. xi-xii.

<sup>4</sup>Thomas F. Armstrong, "Cities and Historians: New Directions," *The Virginia Quarterly Review*, 53 (Summer, 1977), 560-567.



cities. In 1963, Gilbert Osofsky skillfully traced the evolution of the black race in New York, as well as documenting the formation of a black ghetto in Harlem. In 1967, Allan Spear tracked the development of a physical and institutional ghetto in Chicago. Kenneth Kusmer did the same for Cleveland. In addition to Osofsky, Spear, and Kusmer, a number of other historians also assessed the impact of large-scale black migration and growing white hostility on residential patterns in northern cities. The influx of blacks into a predominantly white city has often resulted in the formation of a physical ghetto -- a demographic colony in which blacks are forced to reside because of their race. In response to the making of the physical ghetto, black leadership created an institutional ghetto in which the black community forged its own institutions, organizations, and businesses.

The aforementioned monographs examined the black urban experience between 1890 and 1930. These studies have neglected to analyze the impact of the Great Depression on blacks in the city. In addition, despite Arnold R. Hirsh's examination of the effects of federal and local housing policies on the reshaping and reinforcement of the first ghetto in Chicago after World War II, there has been a virtual scarcity of scholarship on the post-World War II black community in the northern city. Nevertheless, the studies of the black community between 1890 and 1920 have provided a sound foundation on which to construct the post-World War II black urban experience.

The first two chapters of this study follow the framework set forth by the urban historians of the late 1960's and 1970's. Chapter One examines the immediate impact of black migration and settlement on a predominantly white working-class city. The

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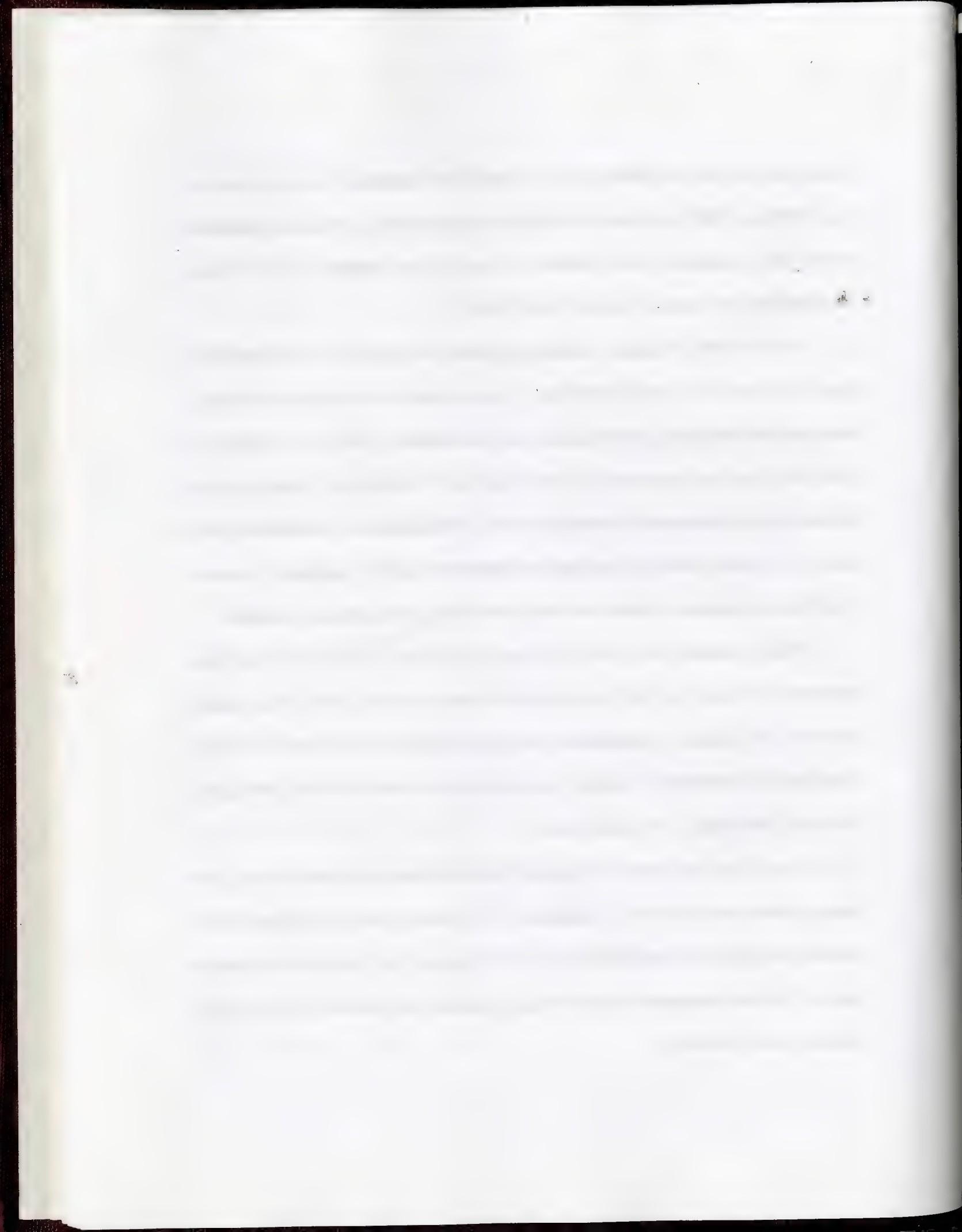
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second chapter traces the formation of a physical and institutional ghetto between the years 1920 and 1940. In addition, the chapter assesses the effects of the Great Depression on Newark's burgeoning black community. Lastly, it comtemplates the rise of a new black middle-class militancy during World War II.

Chapter Three documents the making of the second ghetto in Newark between the years 1945 and 1967. After World War II the combination of a number of forces -- sustained black migration, suburbanization, and ghettoization -- initiated the formation of a second ghetto and, subsequently a sprawling slum. Furthermore, federal and local housing policies sanctioned the reshaping and the reinforcement of an expanding black ghetto. A vertical ghetto, distinguished by impersonal high-rise apartments, became a prison-like environment in which the black urban dweller was sentenced to inhabit.

Finally, Chapter Four, the last section of the study, examines the civil rights movement in Newark as well as the events leading up to the riots. The growing frustration over decades of maltreatment and neglect roused the city's black community to the point of insurrection. A series of catalytic events between 1965 and 1967 ignited the city's "powderkeg" -- the black ghetto.

The problems leading to the eruption of the black ghetto have a long history. Poor housing, inadequate health care, employment at the lowest paying occupations, and a multitude of social ills plagued Newark's black community for its first five decades in the city. For two generations Newark's black community has embarked on the "deeper struggle" toward survival.



## Chapter One

### Beginnings

#### I

#### The City of Opportunity

In 1834, one citizen of Newark, who had been away from the city for fifteen years, revealed his astonishment at what had taken place in his native town during his absence. He wrote to the *Daily Advertiser*: "I feel emotions both of joy and sorrow arising in my breast. The numerous streets, spires, and wharves, proclaim that the population and commerce have spread further and wider, and the hum of business declares the march of improvements has not yet ceased."<sup>1</sup> Two years later Newark was incorporated as a city, and its past as a quiet, tranquil village had all but vanished. Instead, Newark was now a hub of industrial activity and a manufacturer of a variety of wares. On the eve of the Civil War the City of Newark was already one of the leading industrial centers in the North, and after the war it proudly assumed the sobriquet, "The Birmingham of America." In 1880, the president of the Board of Trade declared, "Our city has become a monster workshop"; ten years later the same board proclaimed that among all cities there was "None Bigger, None Brighter, None Busier."<sup>2</sup> As the new

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<sup>1</sup>John T. Cunningham, *Newark* (Newark: New Jersey Historical Commission, 1988), p. 103.

<sup>2</sup>Samuel H. Popper, "Newark, New Jersey, 1870-1910: Chapters in the Evolution of An American Metropolis" (Ph.D. dissertation, New York University, 1952), p. 14; Cunningham, *Newark*, p. 185.



century approached city officials and business leaders touted Newark as "The City of Opportunity."<sup>3</sup>

While the business and industrial elite benefitted from Newark's rise to industrial greatness, Newark, for many, was not a city of opportunity. In fact, the years from 1890 to 1920 did not inaugurate a golden era, but "marked a period of transformation in Newark which slowly undermined the quality of life in some areas and ushered in a long process of urban decay."<sup>4</sup> Newark, with the exception of the late 1960's and the 1970's, has always been a city run *for* and *by* the white elite -- municipal officials, industrial leaders, and businessmen. At times, these three groups joined forces to fulfill their visions of Newark as the "Master City."<sup>5</sup> While prominent citizens became the city's masters, the bulk of the population became its subjects. Newark profited handsomely from massive industrialization toward the end of the nineteenth century, but it did not extend the benefits of industrialism to its working class. Ignored or left out as the "Master City" grew, Newark's poor, black as well as white, struggled to live decent, healthy, and prosperous lives.

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the impact of black migration and settlement on the City of Newark. While the movement of blacks did not originate with World War I, black migration to Newark between 1916 and 1920 was significant because

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<sup>3</sup>Popper, "Chapters in the Evolution of An American Metropolis," p. 51.

<sup>4</sup>Clement A. Price, "The Afro-American Community of Newark, 1917-1947: A Social History," (Ph.D. dissertation, Rutgers University, 1975), pp. 2-3.

<sup>5</sup>Paul A. Stellhorn, "Depression and Decline, Newark, New Jersey: 1929-1941" Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1983), p. 11.



great numbers of southern blacks settled in the city in a short period of time. The arrival of a large number of southern black migrants altered Newark's image as a predominantly white working-class city. Before 1916, according to one black Newarker, the races "had an accommodating tolerance of one another" -- a tolerance based on the existence of a small, marginalized black population. But after the migration of blacks to the city, "life in Newark for everyone changed dramatically."<sup>6</sup>

To make sense of those changes, one needs to begin by understanding what life was like in the city before the migration. The experience of white immigrants can shed a good deal of light on how the post-migration black community was to fare in Newark.<sup>7</sup> So can the experience of the early black settlers. What were race relations like before the migration? How did the movement of a considerable number of blacks in a short period of time affect Newark -- socially, politically, economically, and racially?

Before World War I Newark was an industrial, working-class city populated by a foreign-stock labor force. Starting in 1890, southern and eastern European peasants flooded into Newark to work in its factories. Although the immigrants found employment, they faced substantial housing shortages. For the most part, they settled into the city's central districts where lodging was relatively inexpensive. The cheap housing was the worst in the city and over the years little or nothing was done to improve it. It

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<sup>6</sup>William Ashby, "Reflections on the Life of Negroes in Newark, 1910-1916," An Address to the Frontier Club, February 16, 1972, pp. 2-3, available at the Newark Public Library.

<sup>7</sup>Kenneth L. Kusmer has proposed "to make the process of ghetto development more comprehensible by systematically surveying changing whites attitudes toward blacks; by comparing, at as many points as possible, the position of blacks in the social order with the position of immigrants and native whites; and by placing the growth of the ghetto in its urban as well as its purely racial context." Kenneth L. Kusmer, *A Ghetto Takes Shape: Black Cleveland, 1870-1930* (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1976), p. xi.



was not uncommon in some sections of the city for a group of four to five immigrant families to live in "the old, dilapidated, single house designed originally for one family." The inevitable results of such overcrowding were "constant discomfort, the spread of tuberculosis, the breaking down of family life. . . and widespread mortality."<sup>8</sup>

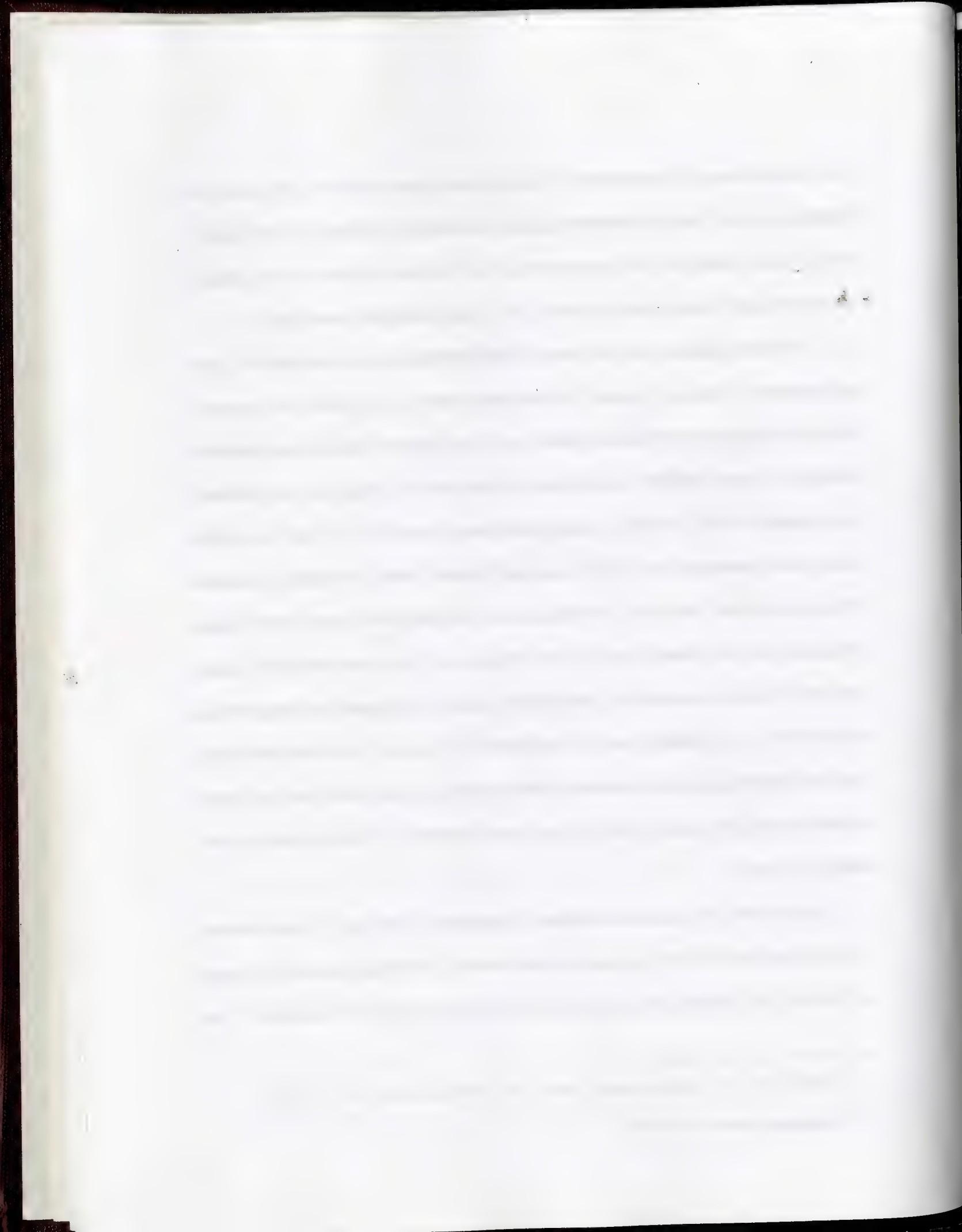
Industrial activity, after the dawn of the twentieth century, continued at a pace unprecedented in the city's history. In fact, some Newarkers, especially the economic elite, saw the years 1900-1916 as a golden age in which the city reached new heights of expansion. A new City Hall was completed in 1906, and the County of Essex dedicated a courthouse in 1907. The first of many skyscrapers pierced the city's skyline in 1910. Rapid transit came to the city in 1911 when the "Hudson Tubes" successfully connected Newark with New York City. Simultaneously, the Board of Works quietly began purchasing land off Newark Bay. This property, part of which was previously useless marshland, was soon excavated and, subsequently, a mile-long channel was dug providing the city with a new shipping canal.<sup>9</sup> City officials took care of day-to-day business in their new municipal edifices; Newarkers now had access to mass transit; and the Port of Newark opened for a steady flow of world-wide commerce. Newark had the most modern facilities.

In the 1890's big business established its own niche in the city. Newark became one of the leading life insurance capitals in the country. Prudential Insurance Company and Mutual Life Benefit Life Insurance Company located their headquarters in the

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<sup>8</sup>Willard D. Price, *The Ironbound District* (Newark, N.J.: The Neighborhood House, 1912), p. 23.

<sup>9</sup>Cunningham, *Newark*, pp. 239-249.



burgeoning downtown business district. Newark was also home to a number of New Jersey's better-known corporations, including the Public Service Corporation and New Jersey Bell Telephone Company. In fact, although the city "still boasted of its diversified manufacturing, Newark was becoming a white collar community."<sup>10</sup> Newark was now the ideal place to conduct business in the state as well as the industrialist's dream location for a plant or factory.

Almost thirty years before the World War I migration of blacks, Newark suffered from problems which stemmed from sustained urban growth. Between 1890 and 1920 Newark's total population increased from 181,830 to 414,524. During that thirty-year span of intense immigration and migration, the city experienced considerable spatial limitations, a constant shortage of housing, and rising municipal costs. The combination of these three forces, as we shall see, greatly frustrated Newark's advancement as a city.

Throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, according to Kenneth T. Jackson, "American cities annexed adjacent land and grew steadily larger in area and in population."<sup>11</sup> From 1890 to 1920 Newark's population grew by 128 percent, but its land area remained almost unchanged, the exception being the small, inconsequential annexation of Vailsburg in 1905. Moreover, eighteen percent of the city's twenty-four square miles was uninhabitable marshland. City officials made numerous attempts to annex and/or consolidate territory outside the city's limits. The shortage of living space

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<sup>10</sup>Stuart Galishoff, *Safeguarding the Public Health: Newark, 1895-1918* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1975), p. 14.

<sup>11</sup>Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 140.



and housing prompted two surveyors of Newark to conclude:

It will be utterly impossible for Newark to house its working population in individual homes unless the city and all its contiguous suburbs within Essex County at least, can be treated as a single political unit in the preparation of street, district, block, and lot plans form. . . . Considerable economy in the planning of city and suburbs as well as in the administration of all city institutions and of private business, could be affected if the suburbs could be incorporated in political Newark.<sup>12</sup>

In 1915, the City Plan Commission realized that "cities normally expand in area in proportion to increase in population," but it also conceded that "the residential possibilities of Newark have nearly reached their limit."<sup>13</sup> The influx of immigrants and black migrants exacerbated the situation. Newark was unable to house its population, and unlike New York, Philadelphia, and Chicago, it was not able to annex or consolidate territory from the periphery.<sup>14</sup>

Prior to 1910 city officials, for the most part, believed that city planning meant erecting civic buildings, constructing new modes of transportation, and laying out streets to alleviate traffic congestion downtown. However, Mayor Jacob Haussling, in his annual address in 1913, extended the meaning of city planning:

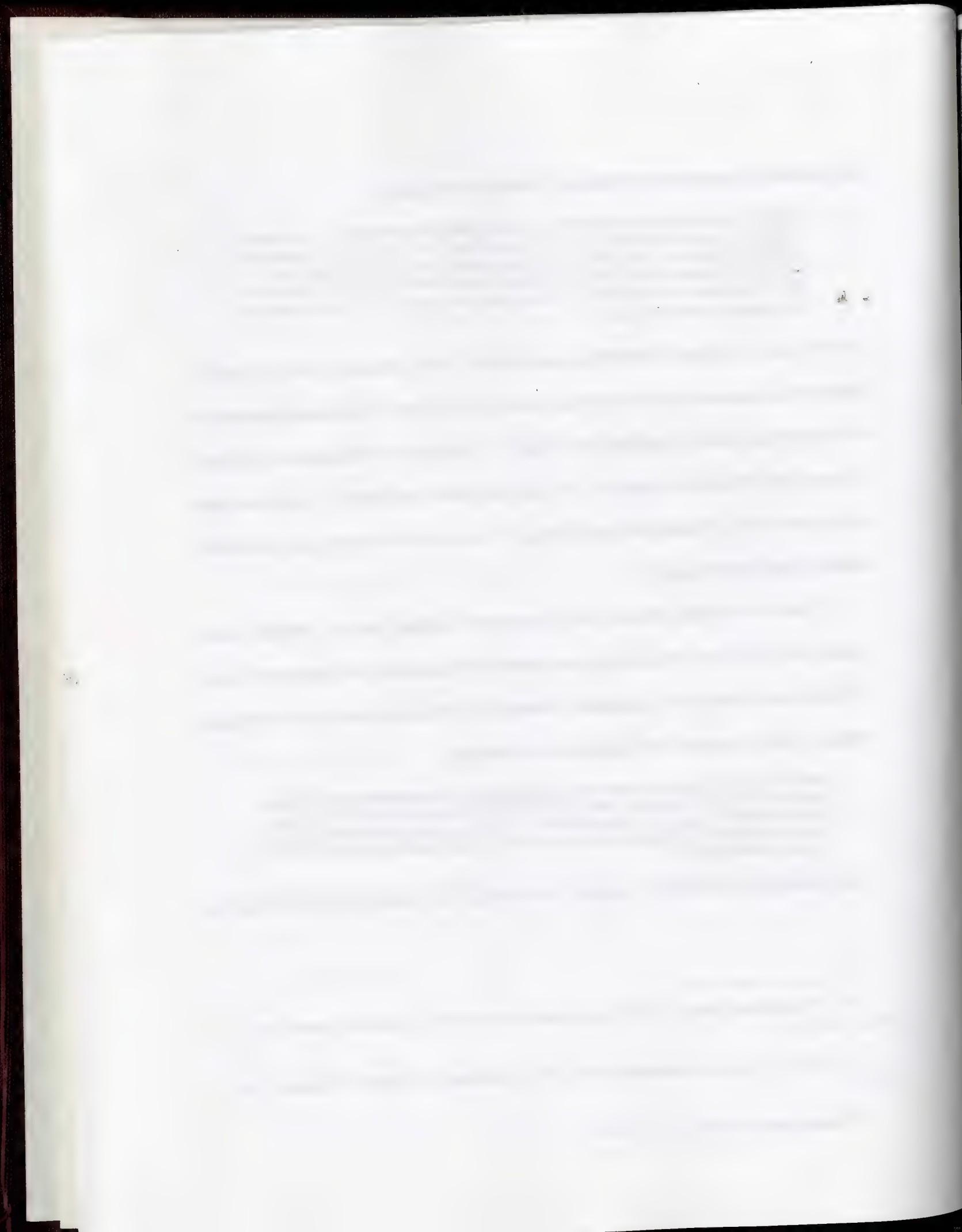
Hence arises the need for what is known as city planning; hence also the necessity for stricter building regulations and drastic health codes; hence also the necessity for large police and fire forces; hence also the necessity for agencies to deal scientifically with social problems, to relieve want, to protect the young, to provide recreation and to raise up and stimulate those who have been beaten down in a fierce economic struggle.

Mayor Haussling concluded his address by insisting, "The errors of the past must be

<sup>12</sup>E. P. Goodrich and George B. Ford, *Housing Report to the City Plan Commission* (Newark: Plum Press, 1913), p. 57.

<sup>13</sup>City Plan Commission, *Comprehensive Plan of Newark* (Newark, N.J: City Plan Commission, 1915), p. xxii.

<sup>14</sup>Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*, pp. 140-148.



resolutely sought out and corrected."<sup>15</sup>

## II

### The City of Newark: The Pre-Migration Years

After the Civil War, German immigrants began moving to the Third Ward, popularly known as the Hill District. "The Hill," aptly named because it ascended from downtown Newark, was a plot of land covering only 0.43 square miles. By the time Jews and Poles settled there in the 1890's, the Hill District was one of the city's worst slums. A Jewish immigrant, born in Newark in 1898, reminisced about the old Third Ward of his childhood: "The homes in the ward were poorly built . . . . The parents never made enough to clothe and feed the family. We went hungry more than once with nothing at all to eat."<sup>16</sup> Ernest W. Pentz, a fieldworker for the New Jersey Ethnic Survey, had this to report after visiting a member of a Polish community:

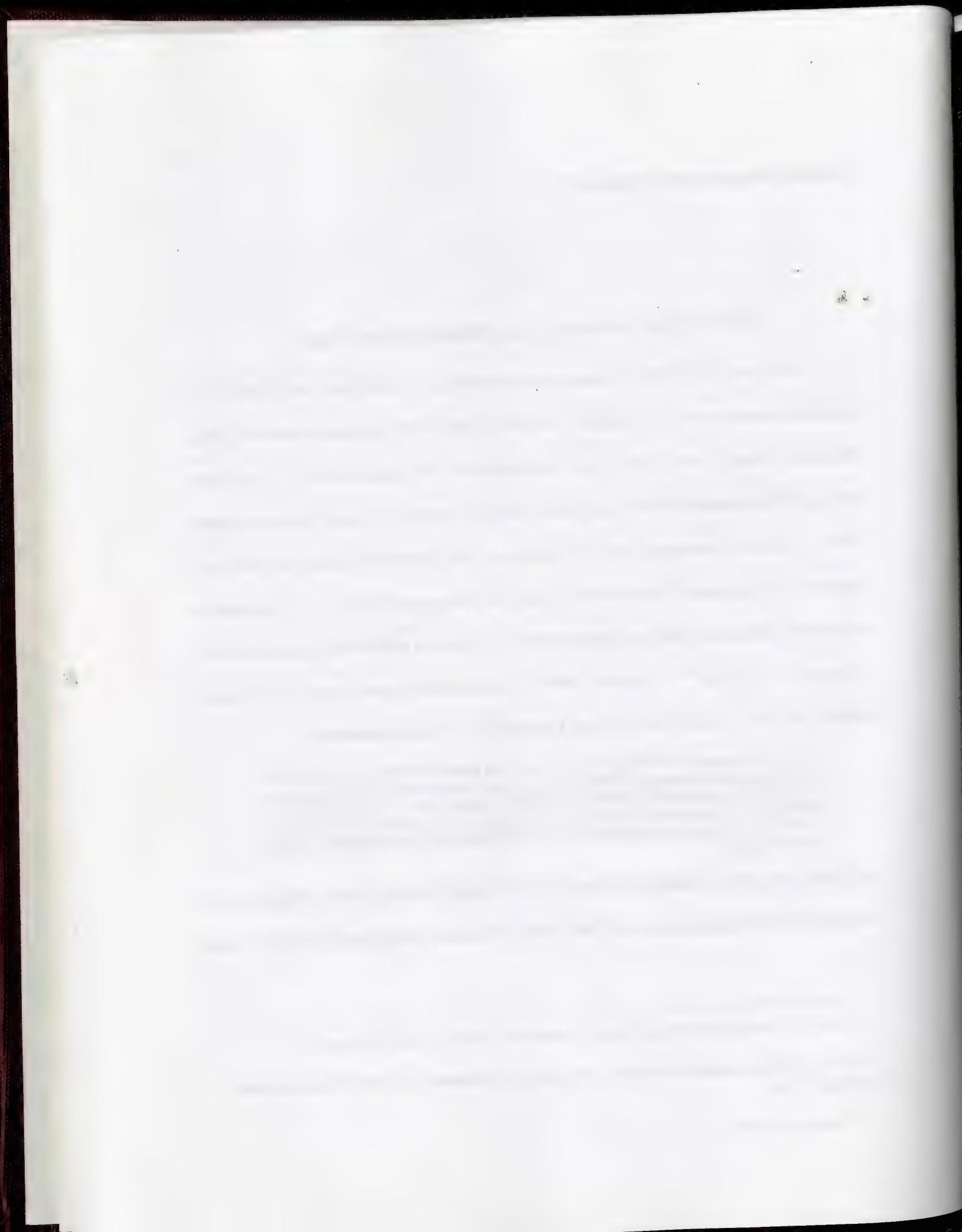
Because of the absence of sanitary conditions in the Polish sections, they had a high mortality rate. This was especially true among the children. In the early 1900's, the respondent, who is an undertaker, declared that he used to bury on average fifteen Polish children a week. . . . In this period in the development of Newark industry, immigrants were coming over here in droves, and no effort was made to improve their ugly surroundings. New homes, which should have been provided for them, were never built.<sup>17</sup>

In 1916, the city's leading newspaper, *The Newark Evening News*, described the deplorable living conditions in the Third Ward: "There are many sleeping rooms in the

<sup>15</sup>Board of Commissioners, *Annual Report* (Newark, N.J.: The Essex Press, 1913), p. 20.

<sup>16</sup>David S. Cohen, *America, The Dream of My Life* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1990), pp. 198-99.

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 118-119.



third ward into which the sun never looks, where the air enters only by way of damp narrow shafts, some of them not more than five feet wide.<sup>18</sup>

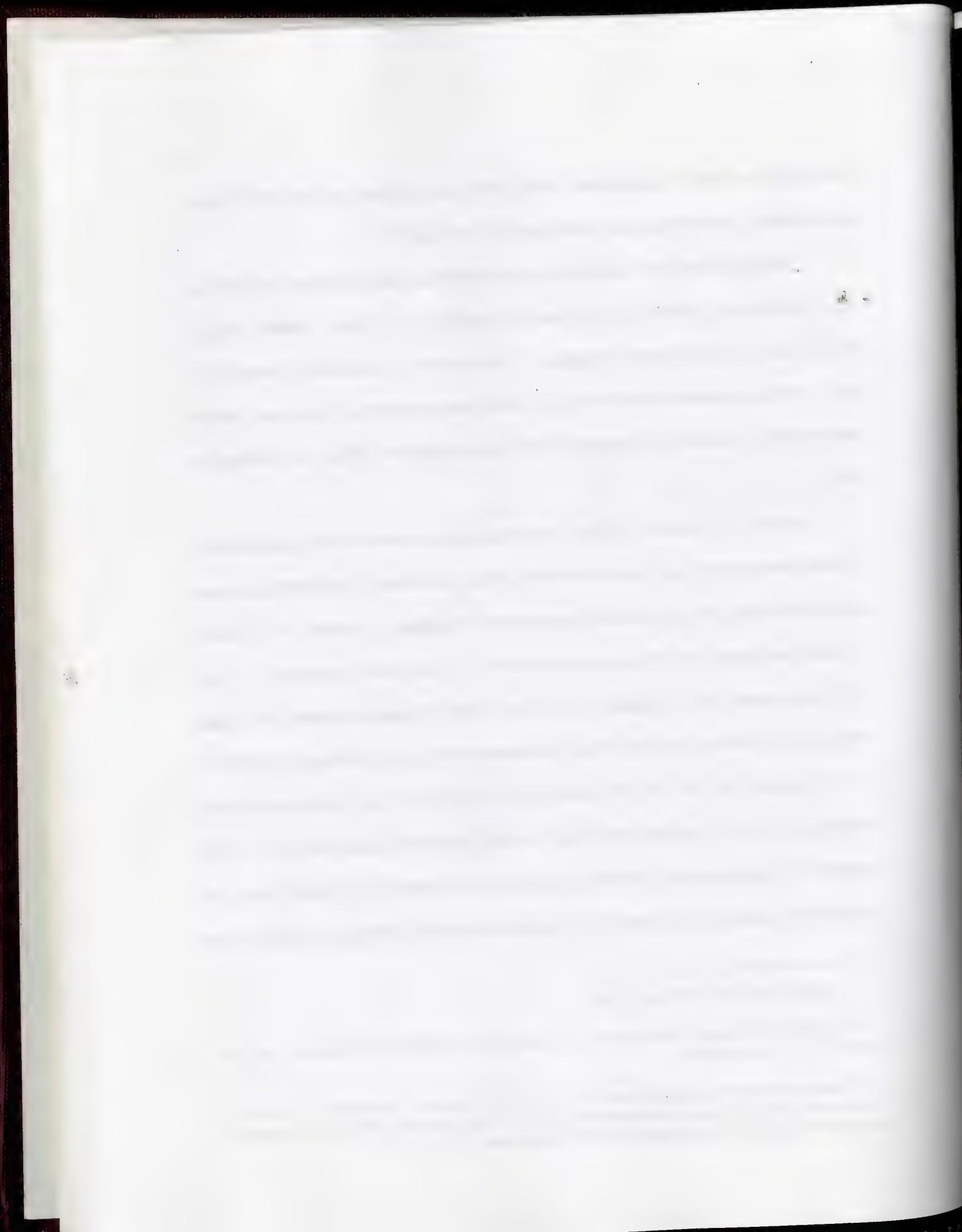
The Third Ward was notorious for its substandard living conditions, and the City Plan Commission conceded that Newark's working-class districts suffered from a "laundry-list" of unwholesome conditions: "Dark rooms and dark halls; basement and cellar dwellings; streets with no sewers; stables near residences; uncovered garbage receptacles and dumping of garbage for fill; over-crowding of rooms; and serious fire risk."<sup>19</sup>

In 1911, Dr. Addison B. Pollard, Superintendent of Schools in Newark, remarked: "I doubt whether there can be found in the world a population of 365,000 souls more universally happy, contented and prosperous than the residents of Newark."<sup>20</sup> He could not have considered the perspectives of the city's working-class population. A mass meeting to protest living conditions in the Third Ward provided a different view. The sponsor of the meeting, the Third Ward Betterment Association, challenged city officials to "erase this blot [the Third Ward] from the face of Newark." They pointed to the city's readiness to build a million dollar civic building commemorating the city's 250th anniversary before providing satisfactory housing for its inhabitants. Henry Green, the association's president, concluded the emotionally charged meeting by imploring the

<sup>18</sup> *Newark Evening News*, February 2, 1916.

<sup>19</sup> City Plan Commission, *A Comprehensive Plan: Can Newark Do Without It?* (Newark, N.J.: City Plan Commission, 1915), pp. 397-398.

<sup>20</sup> Newark Board of Trade, *Annual Report*, 1911, p. 52, cited in Kenneth T. and Barbara B. Jackson, "The Black Experience in Newark: The Growth of the Ghetto," *New Jersey Since 1860: New Findings and Interpretations* (Trenton, N.J.: New Jersey Historical Commission, 1972), p. 40.



government to "make the ward a healthy place to live in, a fit place in which to bring up children, and as well cared for as other sections of the city that are inhabited by people whose economic conditions are more fortunate, but needs are no greater, and, not so great."<sup>21</sup>

### *The City of Newark: "A Conglomeration of Small, Self-Contained Towns"*

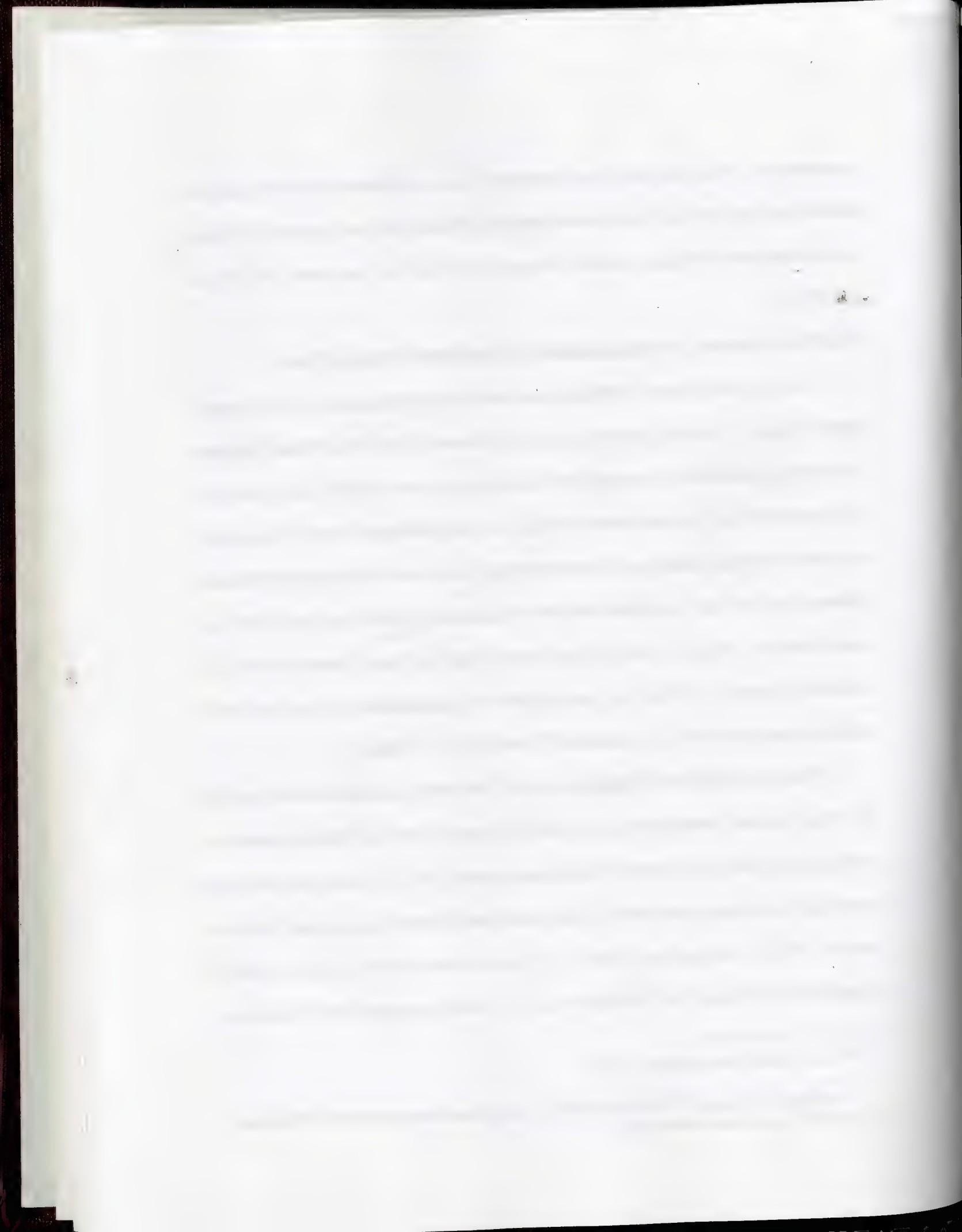
In 1911, the Newark Presbytery published a map delineating the city's ethnic neighborhoods. The map, entitled "A Map of Newark With Areas Where Different Nationalities Predominate," revealed that ethnic enclaves were scattered all over the city. The most prominent were the Jewish and German neighborhoods located in the central city, and the German, Italian, and Irish settlements in the Down Neck section of Newark. The map also indicates two black enclaves proximate to the Irish and Italian sections Down Neck, as well as a larger black colony, west of Broad Street in Newark's downtown district. All told, the map confirms the heterogeneity of the city while indicating patches of ethnic concentration.<sup>22</sup> (See Map 1). (Table I).

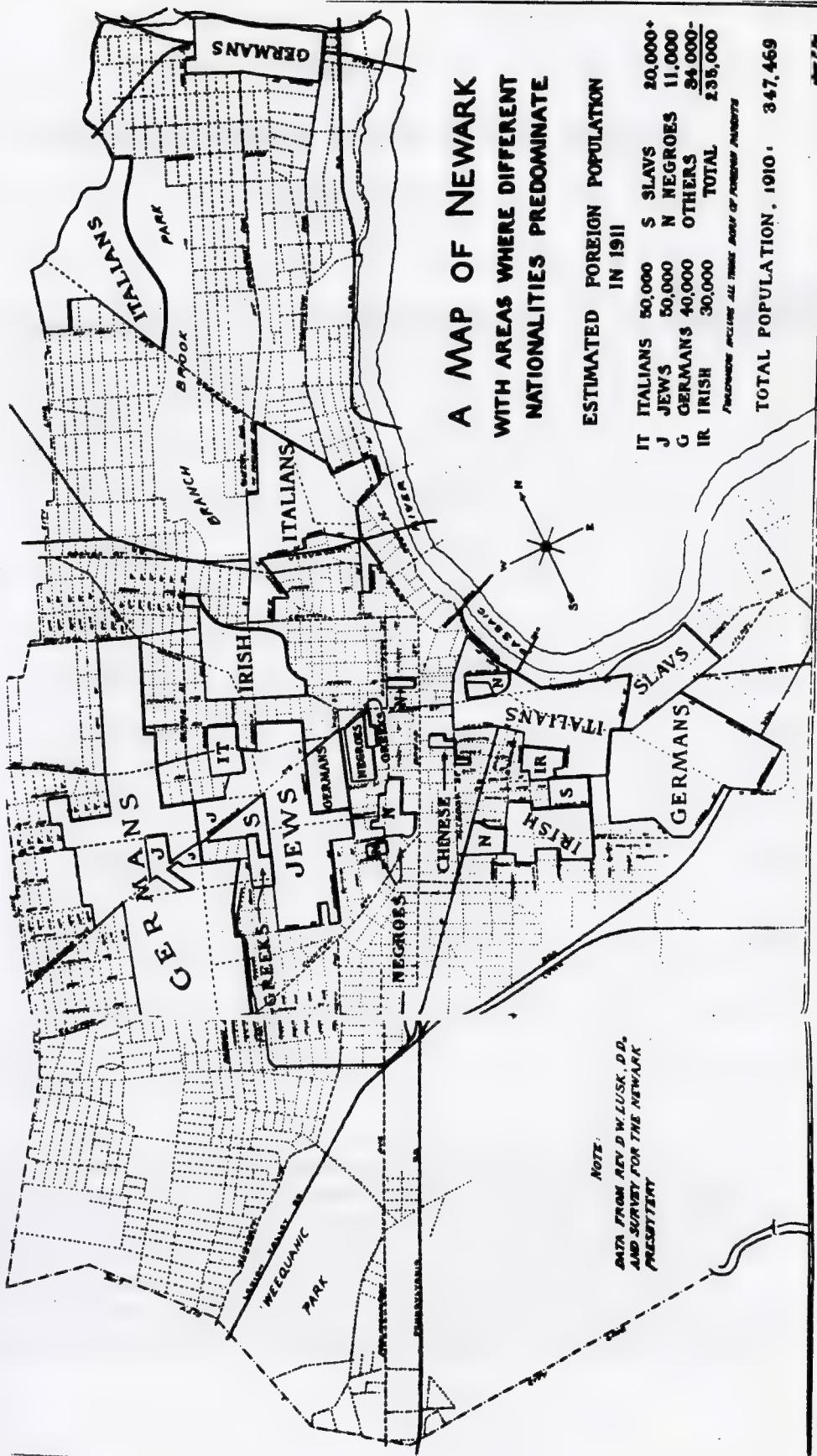
Within the city's ward boundaries closely knit ethnic communities came to life. The ethnic enclave, whether it be Irish, German, Italian, Jewish, or Polish, provided a sanctuary in the midst of a foreign country and culture. Also, the ethnic neighborhood enabled the immigrant to preserve his roots while slowly becoming acclimated to life in America. John T. Cunningham, a historian of Newark, contends that "the city was really a conglomeration of small, self-contained towns. . . . Each community had its own stores,

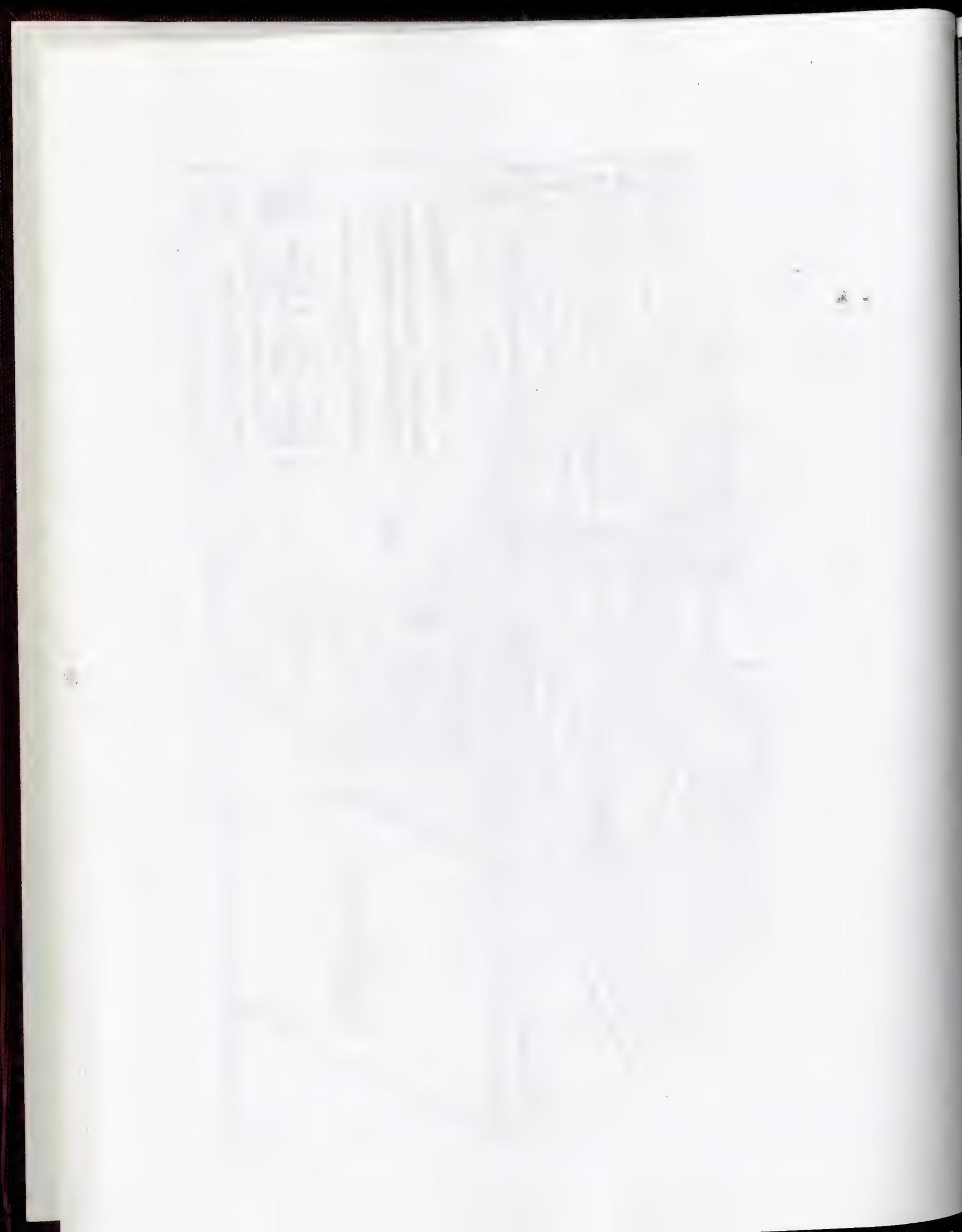
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<sup>21</sup>Newark Evening News, February 29, 1916.

<sup>22</sup>The Newark Presbytery, "A Map of Newark With Areas Where Different Nationalities Predominate," 1911, available at the Newark Public Library.







**Table I**  
**POPULATION TRENDS IN THE CITY OF NEWARK**  
**1890 - 1970**

<u>Year</u>	<u>Total Population</u>	<u>Black Population</u>	<u>Black % of the Total Population</u>
1890	181,830	4,141	2.3
1900	246,070	6,694	2.7
1910	347,469	9,475	2.7
1920	414,524	16,977	4.1
1930	442,337	38,880	8.8
1940	429,760	45,760	10.7
1950	438,776	75,627	17.2
1960	405,220	138,035	34.1
1970	382,417	207,458	54.2

Sources:

- Eleventh Census of the United States, Population: 1890* (Washington: US Govt. Printing Office, 1895), I, 277,709  
*Twelfth Census of the United States, Population: 1900* (Washington: US Government Printing Office, 1901), I, pp. 628  
*Thirteenth Census of the United States, Population: 1910* (Washington: US Government Printing Office, 1913), III: 152  
*Fourteenth Census of the United States, Population: 1920* (Washington: US Government Printing Office, 1922), III: 659  
*Fifteenth Census of the United States, Population: 1930* (Washington: US Government Printing Office, 1932), III: 323  
*Sixteenth Census of the United States, Population: 1940* (Washington: US Government Printing Office, 1943), II, 901.  
*Seventeenth Census of the United States, Population: 1950* (Washington: US Government Printing Office, 1952), II, Part 30, 70.  
*Eighteenth Census of the United States, Population: 1960* (Washington: US Government Printing Office, 1963), I, Part 32, 95.  
*Nineteenth Census of the United States, Population: 1970* (Washington: US Government Printing Office, 1973), I, Part 32, 71.



taverns, churches -- its own pride and its own way of life." In some neighborhoods the lifestyles were completely different, for example, "Roseville was as far removed in atmosphere from Down Neck as Newark was from Milwaukee."<sup>23</sup>

Distinct cultures, therefore, sprang up all over Newark, and each ethnic neighborhood cultivated its own institutions: mutual benefit societies, hospitals, immigrant banks, taverns, sporting clubs, and churches/synagogues. The two single most important institutions were the church/synagogue and the tavern.

Many immigrants established places of worship soon after their arrival. Among the earliest Italian parishes were St. Philip Neri's, Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, and St. Lucy's. The Polish community built two Roman Catholic churches as well: St. Stanislaus in 1889 and St. Casmir's in 1908.<sup>24</sup> The German and Bohemian Jews erected their own synagogues when they came to Newark in the 1850's. When other groups of Jews came, most notably Polish and Russian Jews, the established Jewish community helped them build their synagogues, too.

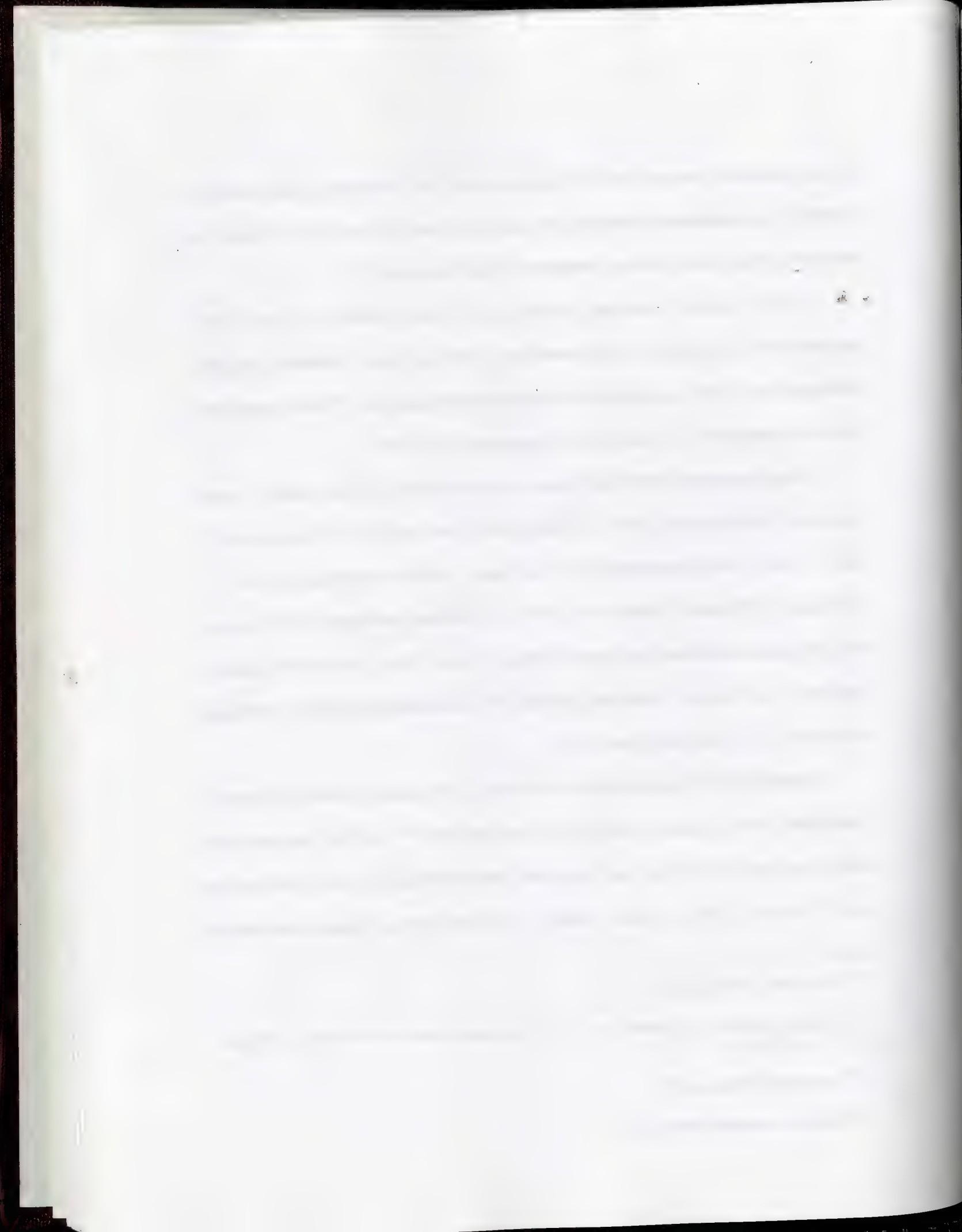
Despite the power and influence of the church, "the saloon," according to John T. Cunningham, "often exerted a stronger pull than the altar."<sup>25</sup> In 1912, the Ironbound District contained 122 taverns, and "as a rule" each nationality in the district had its own.<sup>26</sup> Willard D. Price, a social worker in The Neighborhood House, surveyed the

<sup>23</sup>Cunningham, *Newark*, p. 244.

<sup>24</sup>Barbara Cunningham, ed., *The New Jersey Ethnic Experience* (Union City, N.J.: William H. Wise & Co., 1977), pp. 287, 355.

<sup>25</sup>Cunningham, *Newark*, p. 208.

<sup>26</sup>Price, *The Ironbound District*, p. 10.



Ironbound district and found that the tavern served an important social and cultural purpose. He declared:

The men, after a hasty supper in a dirty, crowded home or boarding house, quite naturally leave such unattractive surroundings to spend the evening playing cards and drinking in a warm, well lighted saloon. Friends find it a convenient meeting place, work and wages are discussed, political arguments are frequent, and recent immigrants discover it an admirable school in which to learn English rapidly and gain an acquaintance with things American. Some of the saloons run saving banks. Many of them serve as club rooms for various social and political associations.<sup>27</sup>

Dance halls, where many younger immigrants met and socialized, were usually directly connected to the tavern. In conclusion, Price realized that "the saloons fill a real and vital social need. . . . Until other social agencies equip themselves to fill that need as extensively, the popularity of the saloon is secure."<sup>28</sup>

### III

#### The Early Black Community

##### *Residential Patterns*

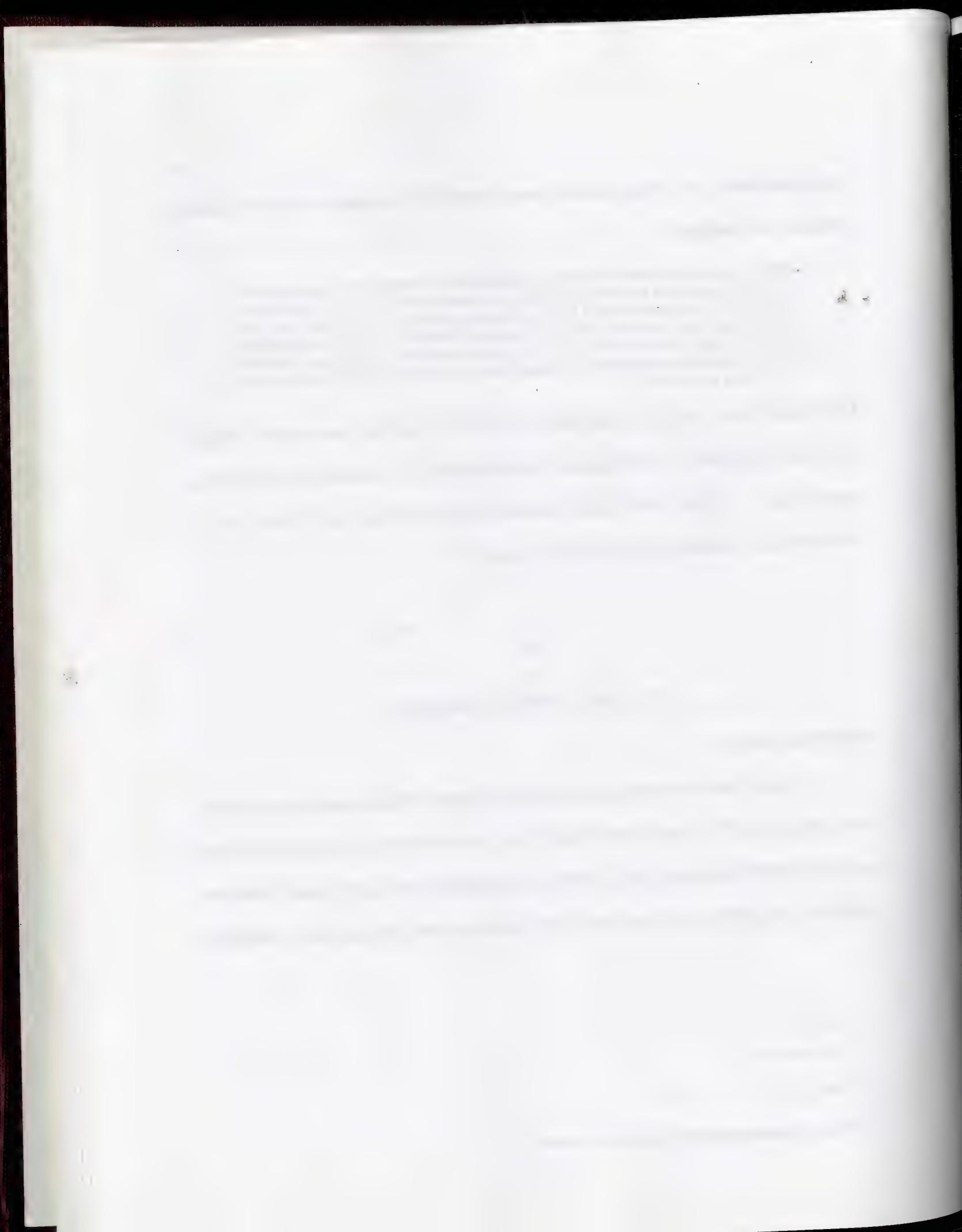
The early black community in Newark was "a small and dispersed minority in the city's population."<sup>29</sup> Throughout the early part of the nineteenth century the black population never rose above 2,000. The black community, though, grew steadily after the Civil War. By 1900 Newark contained 6,694 blacks; ten years later, the black community

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<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 9-10.

<sup>28</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 24.

<sup>29</sup>Price, "The Afro-American Community in Newark," p. 13.



numbered 9,474.<sup>30</sup> Kenneth T. Jackson, a noted urban historian, described this era in the history of Black Newark as the "Years of Invisibility," for the "Negro proportion of the total [population] hovered between 1.7 percent and 2.7 percent."<sup>31</sup> Likewise, Clement A. Price, the author of numerous works on Black Newark, contended that except for a black enclave in the downtown district of Newark, "blacks lived in relative anonymity in predominantly white neighborhoods."<sup>32</sup> Even though blacks did not live in the Forest Hill, Roseville, Vailsburg, and Woodside sections of the city, William Ashby, a long-time black resident of Newark, claimed that "Negroes were scattered in large and small patches all over" the city.<sup>33</sup>

Between 1910 and 1920, though, black settlement in the central city was more prevalent. In 1910, there were 1,356 blacks living on the Hill, but by 1920, that number grew to 3,126.<sup>34</sup> This development, as will be shown in Chapter Two, was important because it marked the beginning of a pattern of black residency in the city's Third Ward. Furthermore, as blacks continued to settle in the Third Ward, a well-delineated ghetto took shape. By 1930 the Third Ward was the heart of the physical ghetto.

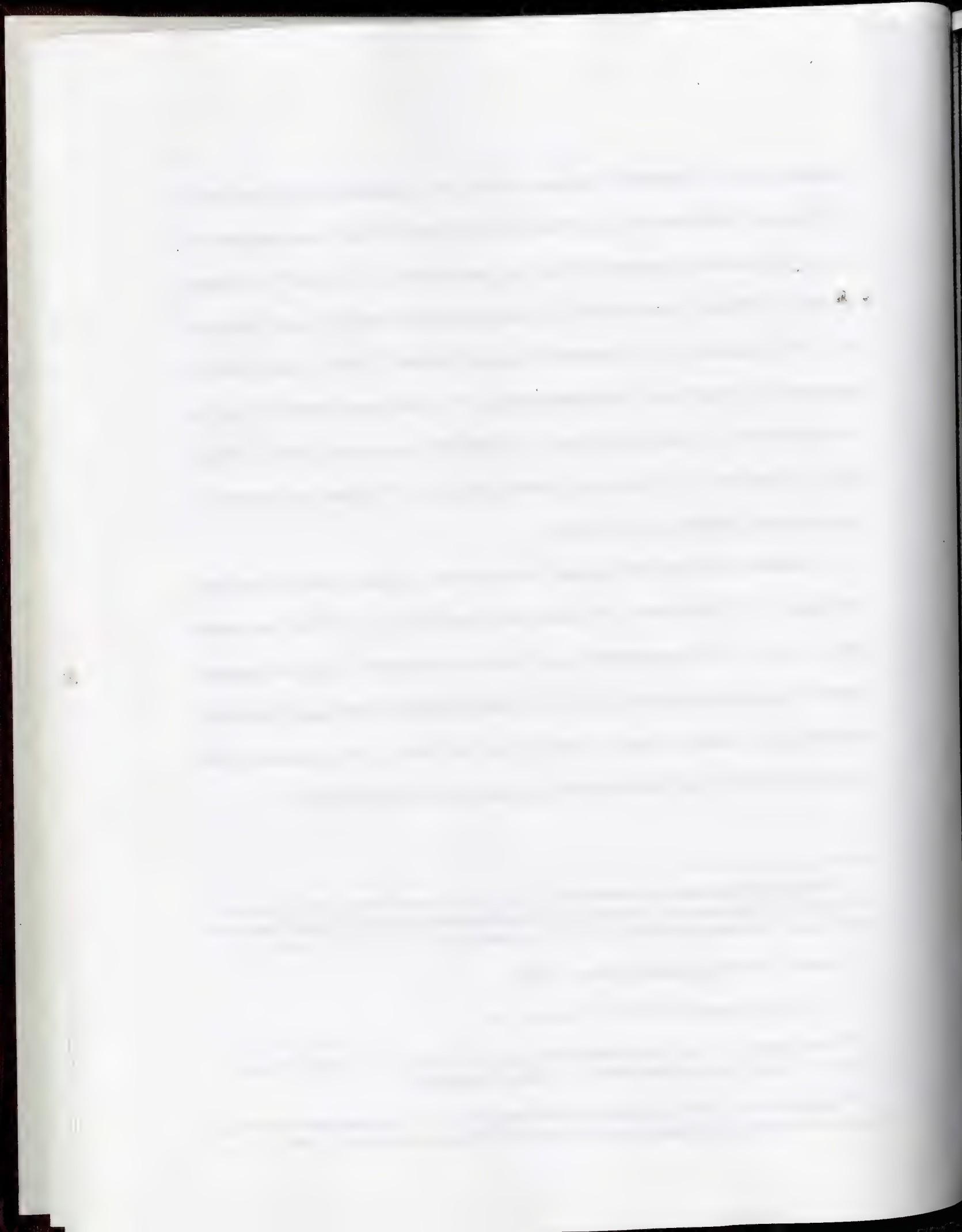
<sup>30</sup>United States Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900: Population* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1901), I, p. 628; *Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910: Population* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1914), III, p. 152.

<sup>31</sup>Jackson, "The Black Experience in Newark," p. 38.

<sup>32</sup>Price, "The Afro-American Community in Newark," p.14.

<sup>33</sup>Ashby, "Reflections on the Life of Negroes in Newark," pp. 3-4. Refer to The Newark Presbytery, "A Map of Newark, With Areas Where Different Nationalities Predominate."

<sup>34</sup>*Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910: Population*, III, p. 152; *Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920: Population* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1922), III, p. 659.



### ***Employment***

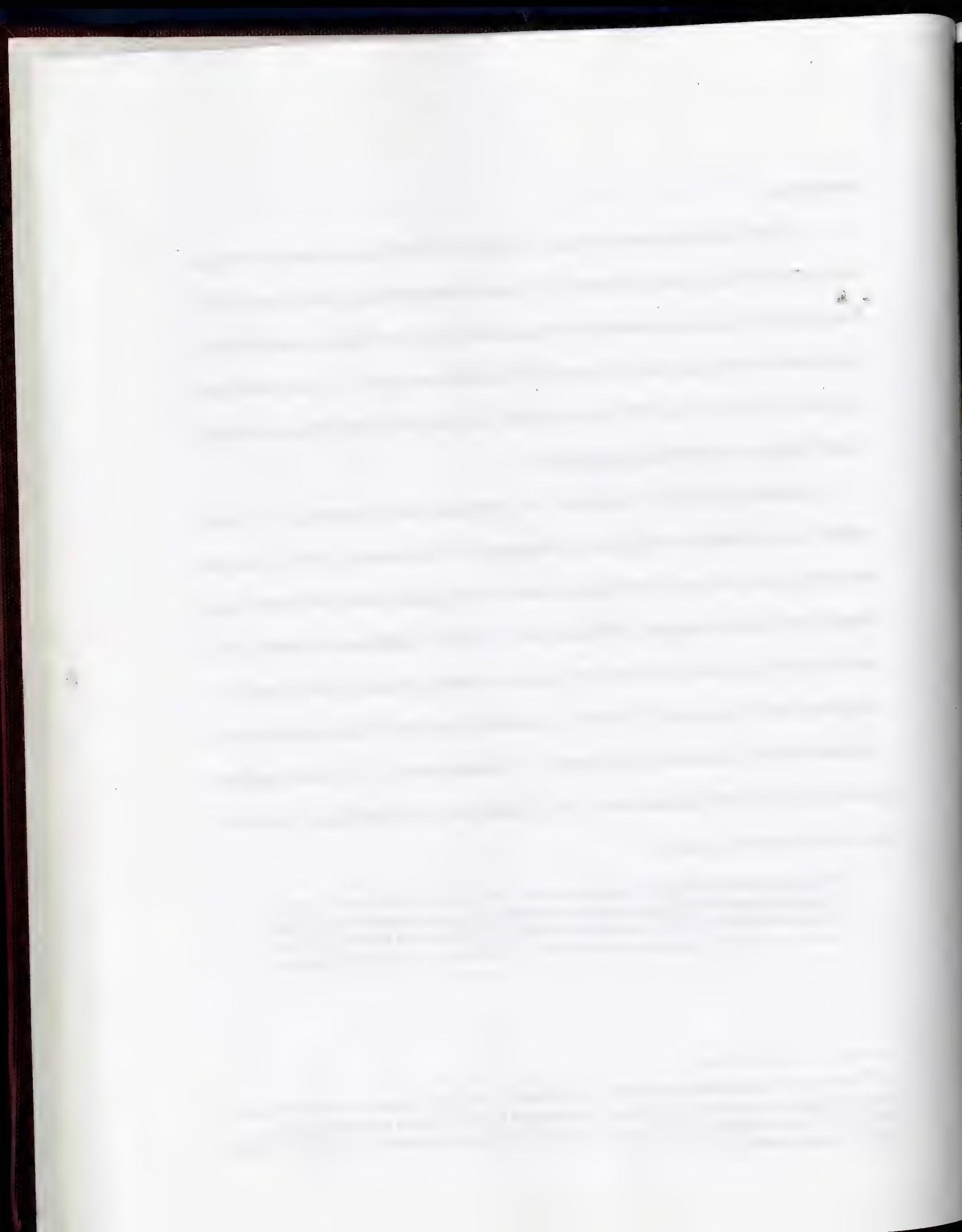
In 1903, the New Jersey Bureau of Statistics of Labor and Industries issued the first known official report on blacks and industrial employment in New Jersey. The Bureau's study, based on a survey of 398 manufacturing establishments, concluded that blacks were, for the most part, kept out of the industrial occupations. In fact, blacks were employed at only 83 of the 398 firms, and when they did secure employment they were usually relegated to the lowest paying jobs.

Discrimination against blacks in the workplace was widespread. A brick manufacturer responded to the Bureau's questionnaire in this manner: "Have no negroes employed at our works and have made no attempt to use negro labor. We prefer white foreign help such as Hungarians, Polanders, etc." A shoe manufacturer answered: "We have no negroes in our employ because there is a strong prejudice against them." A machinists' union exclaimed: "Negroes not admitted; they and all races but whites are excluded by the constitution of the union."<sup>35</sup> Although only a few unions excluded blacks by way of constitutional means, the unwritten law of the majority of the state's unions had the same impact:

The negro understands fully that under union rules. . . his chances of employment would be seriously lessened. The average employer if obliged to pay the same wages to whites and blacks would prefer the former, and the negro would thus be deprived of the only advantage he now enjoys in the competition for work, that is, a willingness to take whatever wages he

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<sup>35</sup>New Jersey Bureau of Statistics of Labor and Industries, *Twenty-Sixth Annual Report of the Bureau of Statistics of Labor and Industries of New Jersey* (Somerville, N.J., 1909), 188-210 cited Clement A. Price, *Freedom Not Too Far Distant: A Documentary History of Afro-Americans in New Jersey* (Newark, N.J.: New Jersey Historical Society, 1980), pp. 205-211.



can get.<sup>36</sup>

The discriminatory policies of the state's unions would hinder the black worker in Newark for many years to come.

Although blacks faced racial discrimination in the city's labor unions and industries, members of the black community did find employment, albeit in the lowest-paying occupations. According to William Ashby, "With but rare exceptions, all who worked in industry were just common laborers."<sup>37</sup> The Thirteenth United States Census reports that the majority of black men worked as laborers, draymen, teamsters, expressmen, deliverymen, porters, janitors, and servants. Black women were heavily employed in two occupations, for almost eighty percent of employable black females worked as laundresses and servants.<sup>38</sup> Blacks in Newark were disproportionately concentrated in the city's menial jobs. For example, in the manufacturing and mechanical industries 505 black men worked as draymen, teamsters, and expressmen, but there were only 5 apprentices, 13 machinists, and 17 painters. In trade occupations there were 311 black deliverymen, but only 5 store clerks and 8 salesmen. Nearly 900 black women worked as servants, but only 27 labored as housekeepers and stewardesses, positions higher on the occupational ladder.<sup>39</sup> (See Table II).

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<sup>36</sup>W. C. Harrison, "The Negro in Manufacturing and Mechanical Industries," New Jersey Bureau of Statistics, *Report* (1903), cited in Popper, "Chapters in the Evolution of An American Metropolis," pp. 102-103.

<sup>37</sup>Ashby, "Reflections on the Life of Negroes in Newark," p. 5.

<sup>38</sup>*Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910: Population*, VI, pp. 583-584.

<sup>39</sup>*Ibid.*

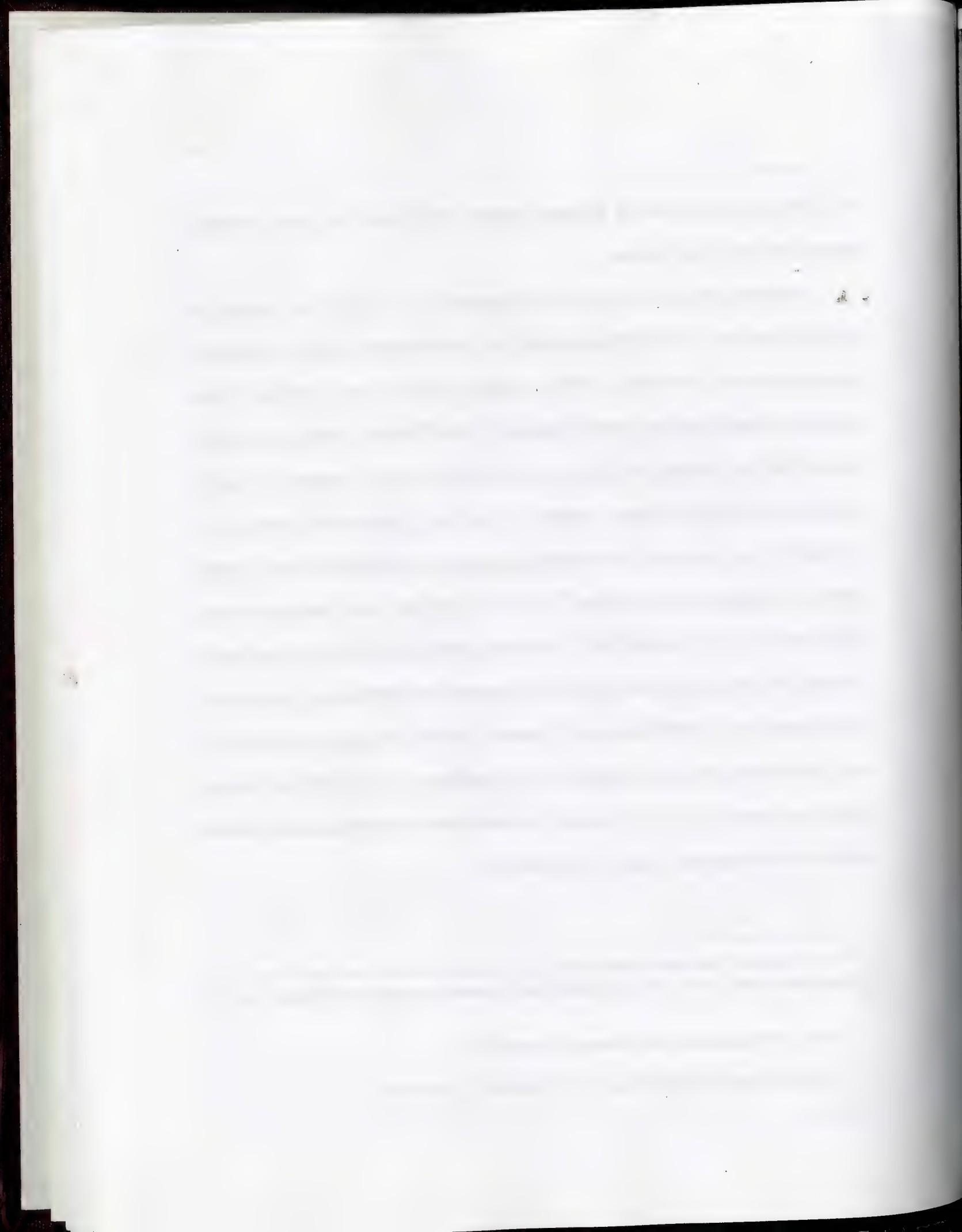


Table II

SELECTED OCCUPATIONAL PROFILE  
CITY OF NEWARK - 1910

<u>Occupational Category</u>	<u>Total Jobs Available In Newark</u>	<u>Number Held By Blacks</u>	<u>Percent Held By Blacks</u>	<u>No. Held By Black Males</u>	<u>% Held By Black Males</u>	<u>No. Held By Black Females</u>	<u>% Held By Black Females</u>
Manufacturing & Mechanical Industries	56,425	678	1.2	554	1.0	124	0.2
Transportation & Trade	26,347	1,054	4.0	1,043	4.0	11	<0.1
Public Service	1,568	20	1.3	20	1.3	0	0
Professional Service	3,618	57	1.6	29	0.8	28	0.8
Domestic and Personal Service	2,384	2,384	17.6	697	5.1	1,687	12.5
Clerical Occupations	13,559	85	0.6	77	0.6	8	<0.1
Other*	34,581	903	2.6	793	2.3	110	0.3
TOTAL	149,633	5,181	3.5	3,213	2.1	1,968	1.4

\*1910 Census did not classify jobs listed in this category.

Source: *Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1913), III: 583-584



Not all blacks in Newark were common laborers, though. A black business class emerged as some blacks managed to own and operate successful businesses. For example, C. M. Brown, known by the locals as "Chicken Brown," owned a poultry stand in Newark's Center Market. A tailor named Richardson made clothes for the well-to-do whites of the city. Mary and Frank Anderson were the proprietors of a restaurant and hotel; among their steady customers were white firemen and policemen. In addition, a small professional group of black doctors, lawyers, dentists, teachers, and undertakers existed in Newark. These black professionals catered to the black community.<sup>40</sup>

### ***Race Relations***

Despite limited opportunity in employment, many black residents in Newark viewed the years before World War I as a time when the races managed to co-exist peacefully. Some believed that black-white relations were congenial and harmonious.

As William Ashby put it:

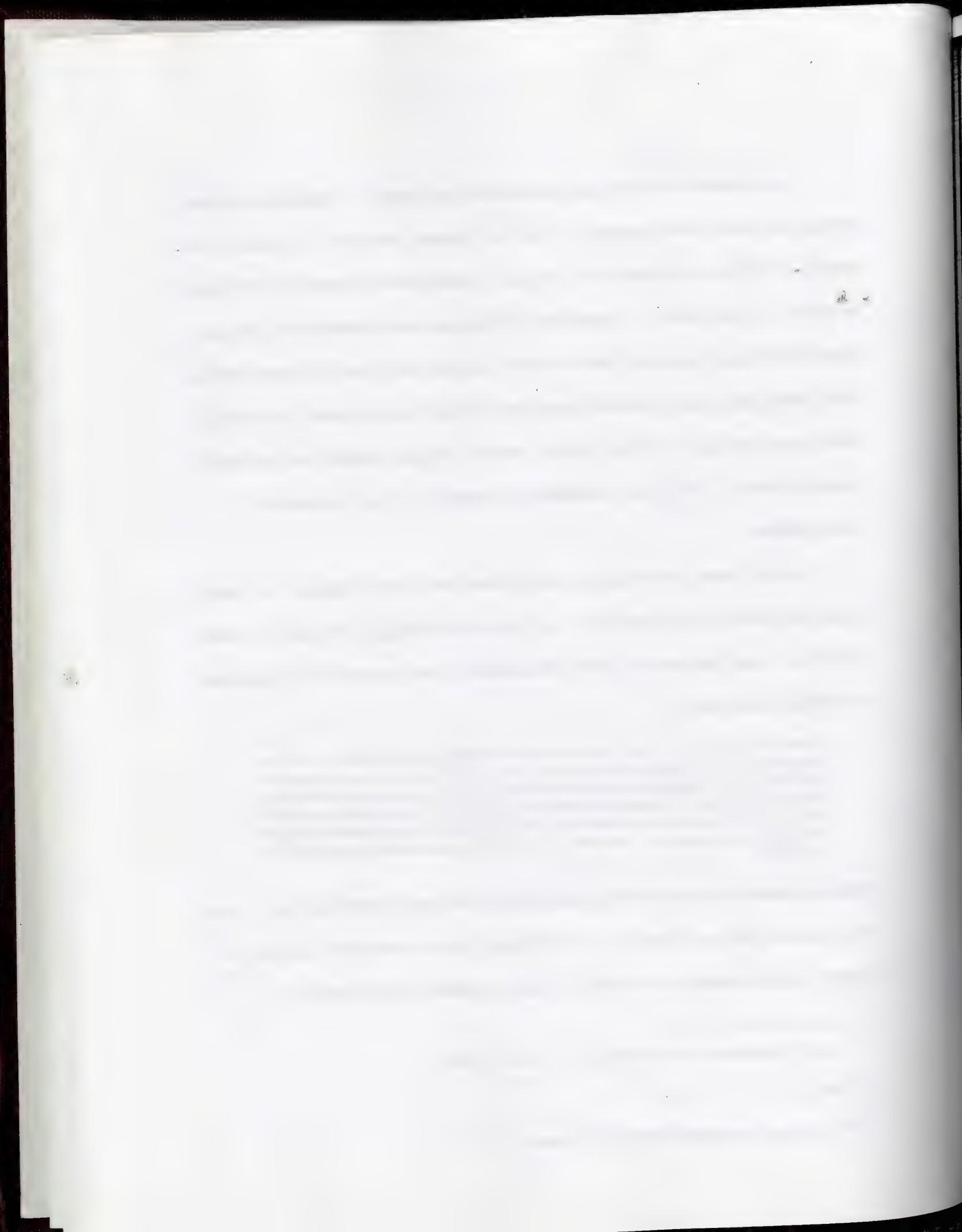
Until 1916, life among us here was a rather staid, even and unexciting thing. In the three centuries we had developed a pattern of getting along, and it seemed to work very well for us. There was little of going across the line and mixing with whites except in a condescending or patronizing manner. There were discriminations, prejudices, restrictions, prohibitions. These were sometimes a little deeper than being merely superficial. But they never penetrated themselves to the depth of "race hatred." We had an accommodating tolerance of one another.<sup>41</sup>

Within the centrally located working-class districts, stated one Newark historian, "blacks often lived on the same blocks as whites, shopped in the same stores, and sent their children to predominantly white schools without organized white opposition."<sup>42</sup>

<sup>40</sup> Ashby, "Reflections on the Life of Negroes in Newark," pp. 8-10.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>42</sup> Price, "The Afro-American Community of Newark," p. 16.



But if the races in Newark "had an accommodating tolerance of one another," it was because the city's black population was small and marginalized. Blacks occupied the lowest positions on the occupational ladder, they had no political power, and they knew not to cross the color line. In reality, the city's black community was non-threatening, and as long the black population stayed small it would remain so. Race relations, therefore, were more accommodating for the city's white citizens than for its black residents.

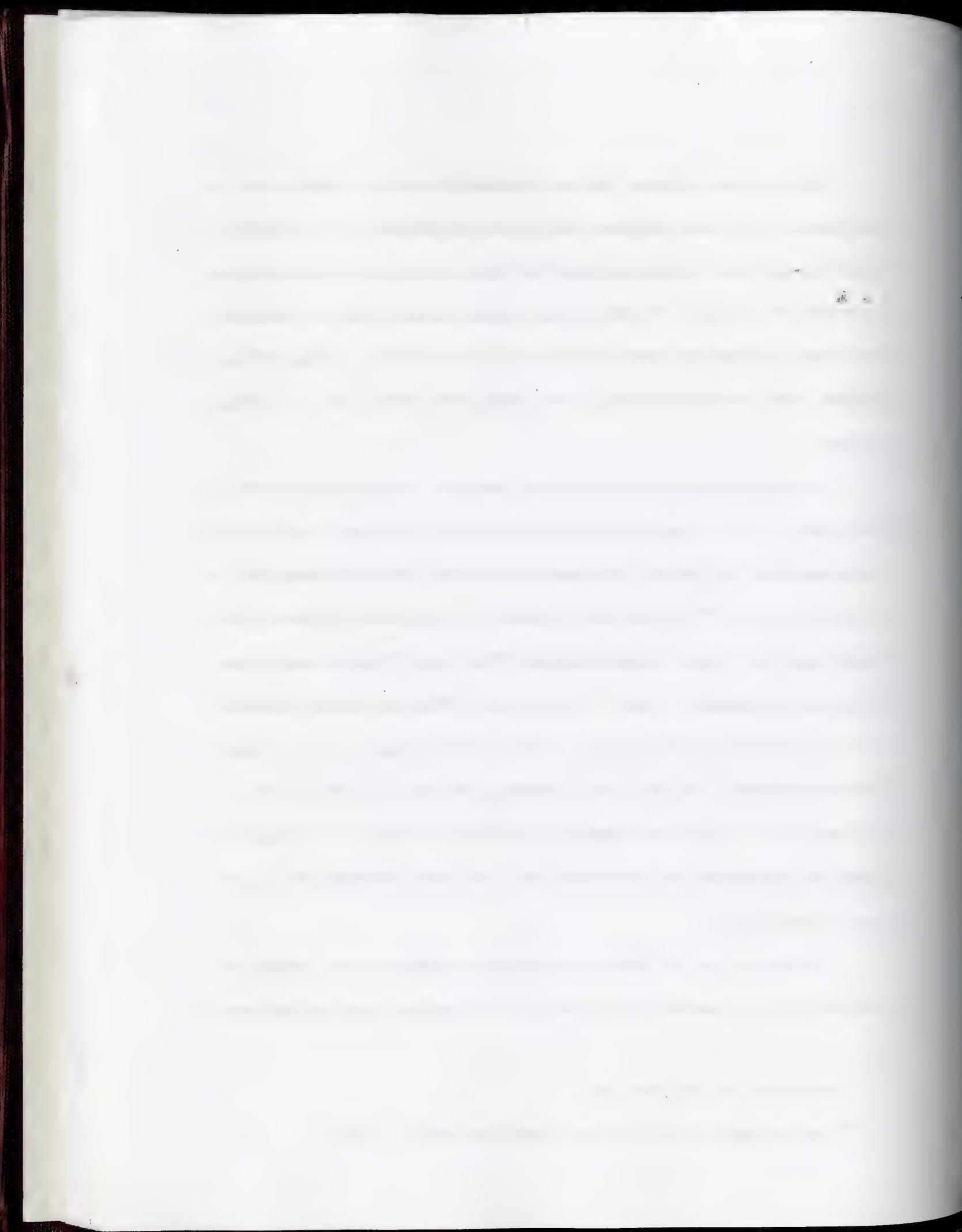
Although blacks and whites did mix in some areas, whites excluded blacks in other areas. In 1916, for example, the Newark chapter of the National Association for the Advancement for Colored People complained that "all respectable restaurants" in Newark barred blacks.<sup>43</sup> One year later, in October 1917, the NAACP organized a silent protest parade down the city's main thoroughfare, Broad Street. The parade was a protest against the discrimination of blacks in employment, suffrage, and housing conditions. Over two thousand blacks led by ministers marched behind banners saying: "Wanted: Political Recognition," "Wanted: Decent Housing! Reasonable Rent!" and "We Are Excluded from the Unions and Condemned for Not Joining Them."<sup>44</sup> Appropriately enough, the protest was silent, because the cries of the black community, for the most part, fell upon deaf ears.

Nevertheless, old black Newarkers believed that progress in race relations was made during the early twentieth century. Despite "discriminations, prejudices, restrictions,

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<sup>43</sup>*Newark Evening News*, November 1, 1964.

<sup>44</sup>*Newark Star-Eagle*, October 5, 1917; *Newark Evening News*, November 1, 1964.



[and] prohibitions," there had not been a publicized racial outburst in the city between 1900 and 1920. By comparison, in New York City, in 1900, a group of Irish immigrants in the city's Tenderloin District terrorized the section's black residents during a four day riot.<sup>45</sup> In Chicago's Hyde Park section white hostility toward blacks became violent in nature. As more blacks migrated to the city, racial tensions heightened. By 1919, Chicago's black belt, the South Side, was the battleground for a city's racial war.<sup>46</sup>

## V

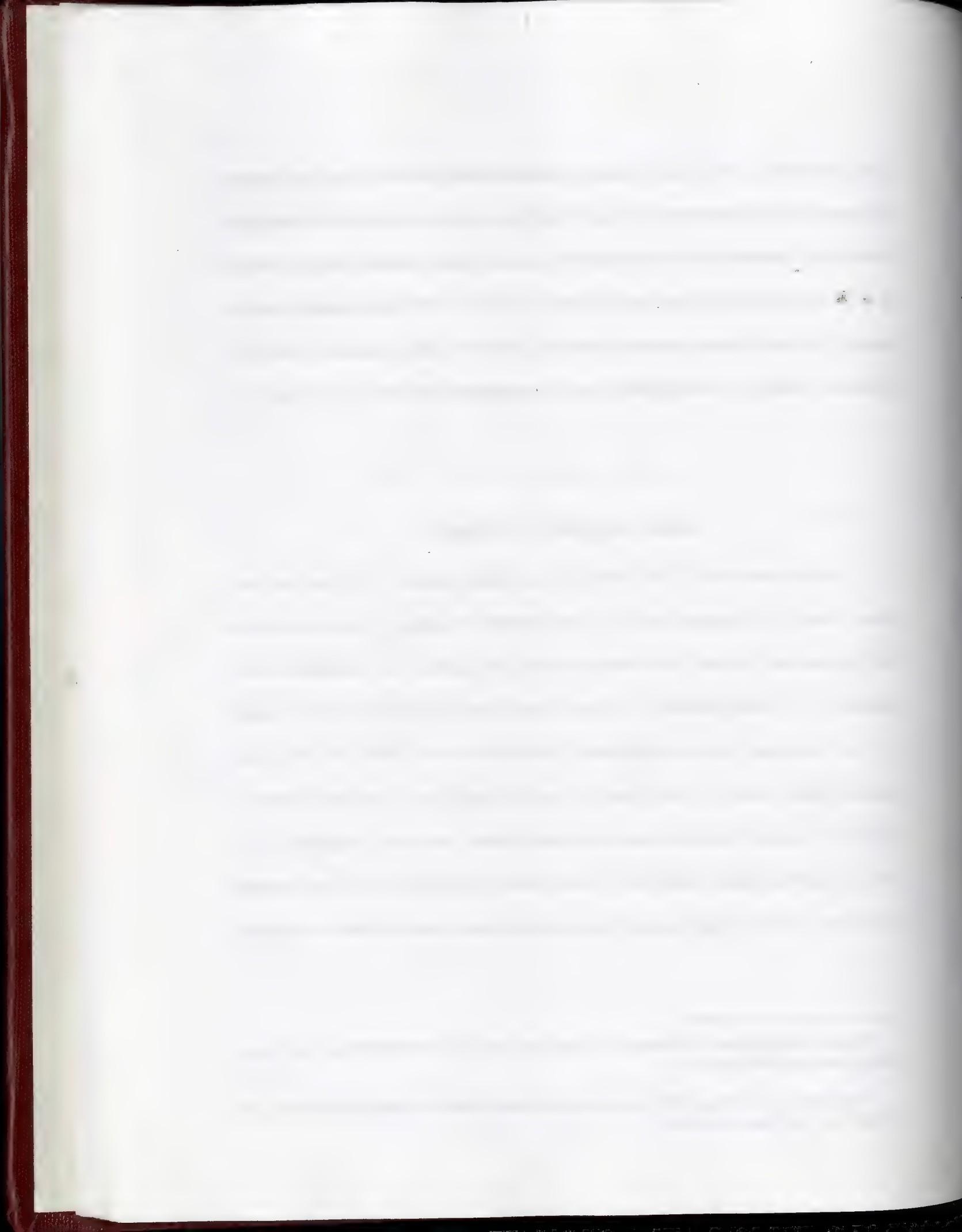
### **Black Migration to Newark**

Blacks have lived in New Jersey for over three centuries. At first, they were slaves, bound to their masters for life. In the nineteenth century, however, they achieved both freedom and the vote. After the promise of Emancipation and Reconstruction was shattered by a violent backlash in the South, many blacks traveled northward in search of a life free from virulent racial hatred. Between the years 1870 and 1890, many southern blacks settled in South Jersey to farm its fertile soil. The steady stream of migration continued through the turn of the new century, but it was augmented by the influx of southern blacks during the Great Migration of 1915-1920. The war industries in the state's northern cities boomed with activity; the lure of employment and economic

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<sup>45</sup>Gilbert Osofsky, *Harlem: The Making of a Ghetto, Negro New York, 1890-1930* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1966), pp. 46-52.

<sup>46</sup>Allan Spear, *Black Chicago: The Making of a Negro Ghetto, 1890-1920* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1967), pp. 21-23, 201-22.



opportunity attracted migrant blacks in unprecedented numbers.<sup>47</sup>

In Newark, New Jersey's largest city, the years 1916 to 1920 marked a considerable increase in black migration to the city. The city's black population increased from approximately 10,000 to 17,000, an increase of nearly eighty percent.<sup>48</sup> Some scholars propose that after the Civil War and Emancipation, the migration northward was the most significant event in the history of the Afro-American people.<sup>49</sup> At the same time, it proved equally important to the development of many American cities, especially Newark.

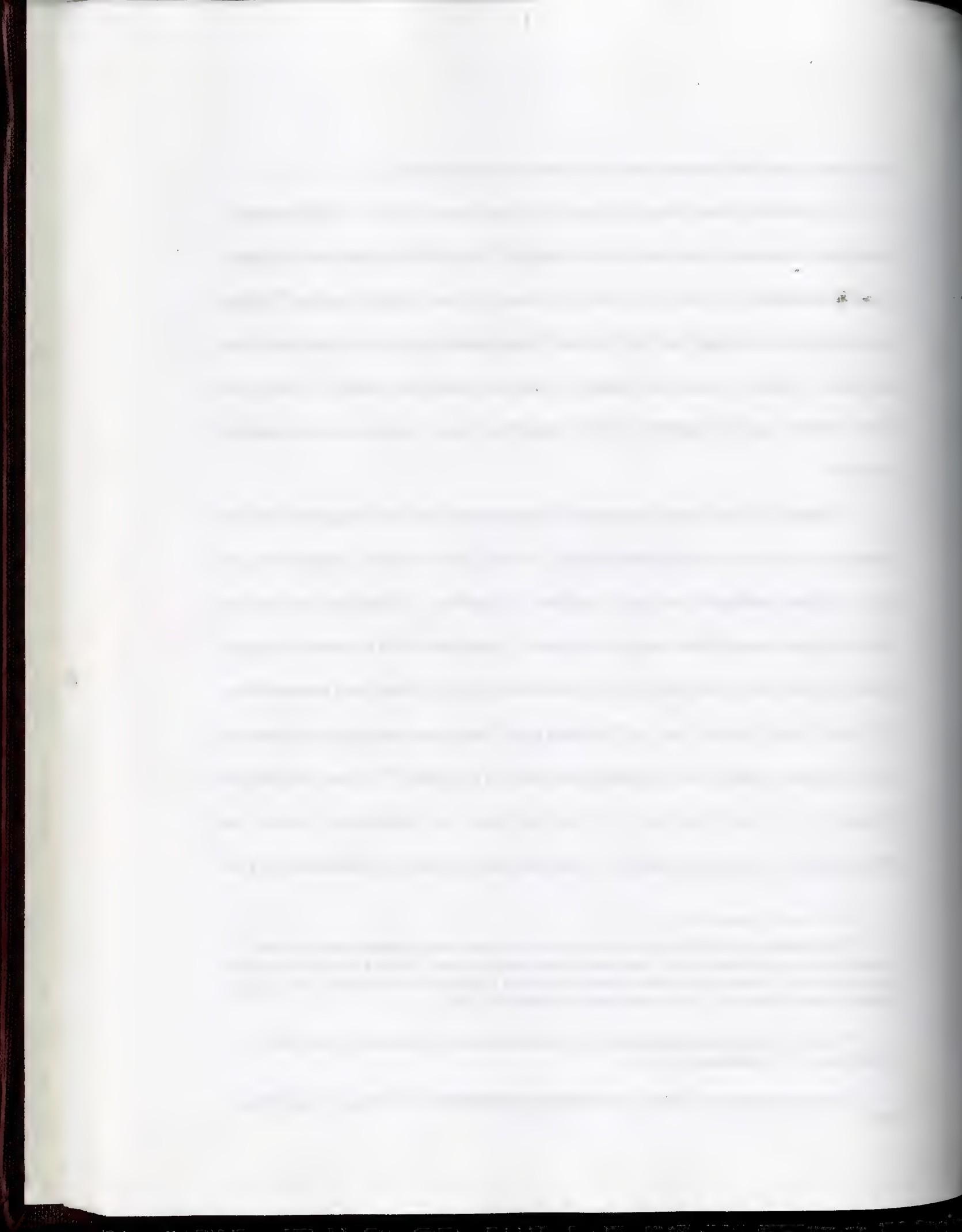
Before 1916 the black community in Newark was small and dispersed, and race relations in the city were apparently cordial. As the size of the black population grew race relations worsened and racial tensions heightened. Widespread racism and discrimination, once hidden under the surface of superficial racial tolerances, began to fester. For the black community, life in Newark was full of contrasts and contradictions. For some blacks, Newark was the "Promised Land" where employment and opportunity were abundant. Many black migrants, however, did not reach "The Land of Milk and Honey," for in the North they still suffered from the ill-effects of racism and discrimination. E. Frederic Morrow, a black man who was born in Hackensack in 1909

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<sup>47</sup>For discussion of the history of Afro-Americans in New Jersey see: Lee Hagan, Larry A. Greene, Leonard Harris and Clement A. Price, "New Jersey Afro-Americans: From Colonial Times to the Present" in Cunningham, ed., *The New Jersey Ethnic Experience* and Giles R. Wright, Afro-Americans in New Jersey: A Short History (Trenton, N.J.: New Jersey Historical Commission, 1988).

<sup>48</sup>*Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910: Population*, III, p. 152; *Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920: Population*, III, p. 659.

<sup>49</sup>August Meier and Elliott Rudwick, *From Planation to Ghetto* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1976), p. 232.



and who went on to become an executive assistant to President Dwight D. Eisenhower, entitled his autobiography, *Way Down South Up North*.

With the onset of war in Europe a number of forces lured southern blacks to the North in search of employment. As country after country entered the war, European immigration essentially stopped. In addition, immigrant Newarkers returned to their native lands to bear arms. As the war progressed Newark became a major supplier of war materiel; its munitions plants, ship-building companies, wire factories and other war-related industries hummed at full capacity. But the city's factories were losing their labor force. Subsequently, the city's industrial leaders turned to the South and actively recruited southern black labor.<sup>50</sup>

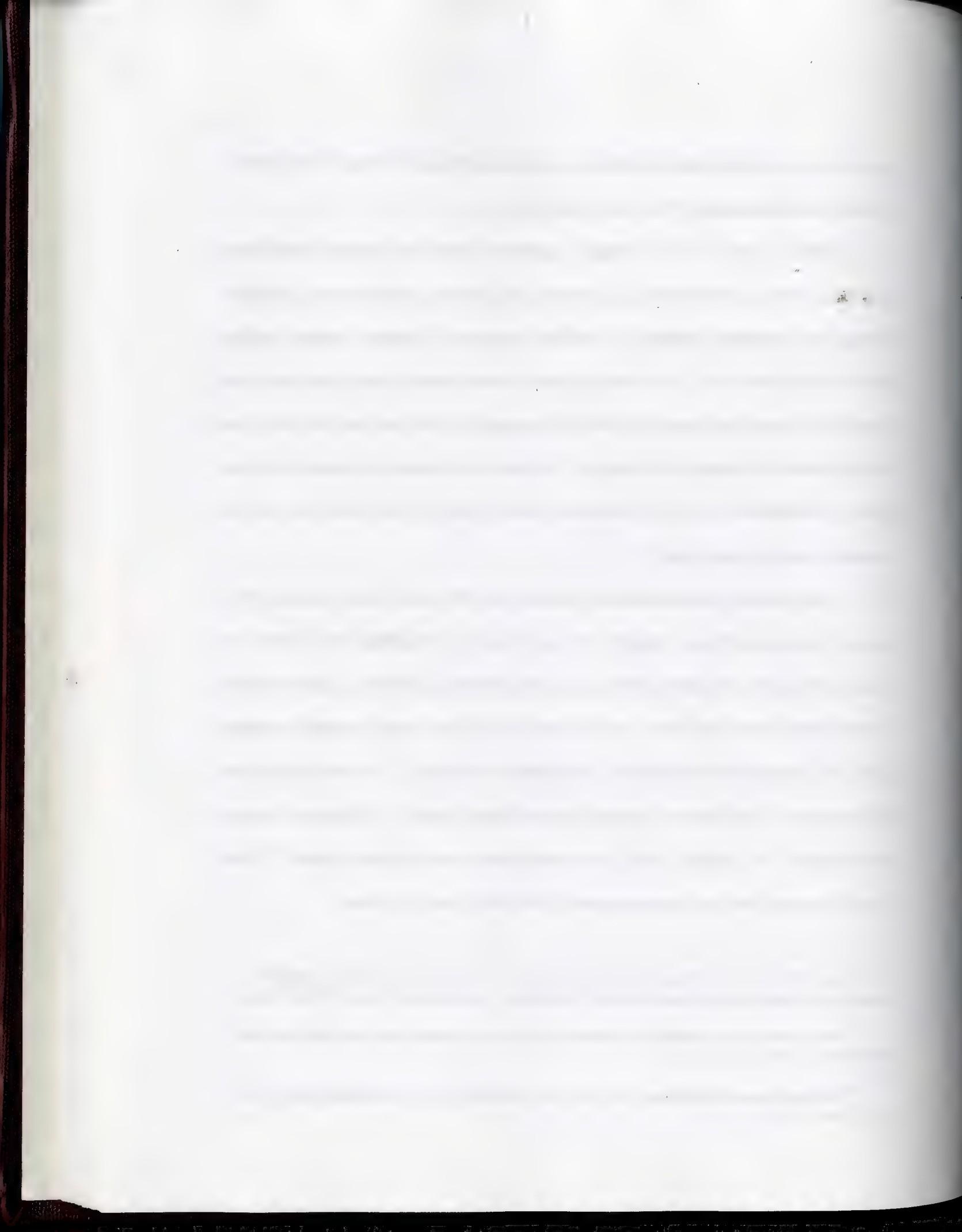
The prospects for employment in Newark were slim while the city remained well-stocked with white foreign laborers. But now that the immigration from Europe was choked off, blacks had more reason to come to Newark. Likewise, a series of events pushed blacks out of the South. In 1915 and 1916 the boll weevil ravaged the cotton plant, and unprecedented storms and floods ruined entire crops. The future of the black sharecropper or field-hand was growing more and more dismal.<sup>51</sup> "Living on a hand-to-mouth basis," the southern black "could not afford to wait for better times."<sup>52</sup> Now, more than ever, there was encouragement to risk life in northern cities.

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<sup>50</sup>Lucy Millburn, *et. al.*, "Historical Summary: The Interracial Movement in Newark" (unpublished report by the Interracial Committee of Newark, N.J., 1945), p. 2, available at the Newark Public Library.

<sup>51</sup>For the causes of the migration, see Emmett J. Scott, *Negro Migration During the War* (New York: Oxford Press, 1920), pp. 13-25.

<sup>52</sup>Arna Bontemps and Jack Conroy, *They Seek A City* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, Doran & Co., Inc., 1945), p. 132.



Even though wages were reportedly two to three times as large in the North as they were in the South, many blacks traveled northward for other reasons. Southern blacks thought that there were better living conditions and schools in the North. Although Jim Crow laws existed in the North, racism, prejudice and discrimination, so they believed, could not be as intense as in the South. Thus, hordes of southern black migrants boarded trains -- with free passages often provided by northern industrialists -- in search of a new life. Slogans symbolizing their optimism were chalked on the sides of "liberty trains": "Farewell -- We're Good and Gone," "Bound for the Promised Land," and "Bound to the Land of Hope."<sup>53</sup>

Newark's accessibility as a port city and a railroad center helped it become a point of destination. Also, the city was located between two huge metropolitan centers, New York and Philadelphia, and therefore received some of the spillover migration from those more crowded cities. In fact, on some occasions, blacks settled in Newark by accident, for "scores of blacks mistakenly departed from their trains when the conductors' bellow of 'Newark' was taken for nearby 'New York.'"<sup>54</sup> The first migrants, usually young or middle-aged men, came principally for the availability of jobs. Some married men saved enough from their unusually high wages to send for their wives and children. Almost every day in Newark's Pennsylvania Station there were "groups of Negro women sitting patiently, surrounded by bundles and babies and shivering in cotton

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<sup>53</sup>Ibid., p. 136.

<sup>54</sup>Price, "The Afro-American Community in Newark," p. 26.

garments. . ."<sup>55</sup> They waited for night to fall; darkness would bring the men to meet them. In the meantime, they hoped and prayed for a better life.

According to Helen Pendleton, a white social worker for the Bureau of Associated Charities, southern black migrants "are lured to this section [Newark] by the prospects of large wages and when they get here they meet with nothing but opposition and disappointments. . ."<sup>56</sup> The city's industrialists, therefore, welcomed their new source of labor, but they did so "with little thought and coordinated plan[ning]. . . dumping them unceremoniously upon unprepared cities whose facilities for accommodating the newcomers were pitifully meager."<sup>57</sup>

### *Employment*

Ironically, the migration of blacks during World War I did not have a significant impact on the status of black employment in Newark. Nevertheless, a subtle change in the nature of black employment did occur. The 1920 census revealed, for the first time, that personal and domestic service, the traditional occupations for an overwhelming number of blacks in Newark, did not employ the greatest number of blacks. The manufacturing and mechanical industries employed 3,529 black men and 619 black women. Yet among these numbers most were relegated to positions of common laborer. Men worked as laborers in the iron and steel industries, as well as in ship and boat

<sup>55</sup> Helen B. Pendleton, "Cotton Pickers in Northern Cities," *Survey*, XXXVII, (February 17, 1917, p. 569.

<sup>56</sup> *Newark Evening News*, January 9, 1917.

<sup>57</sup> Millburn, et. al., "The Interracial Movement in Newark," p. 2.

building. Women were primarily dressmakers and seamstresses, or semiskilled operatives in the city's cigar and tobacco factories.<sup>58</sup> Although blacks did penetrate Newark's industrial establishments, for the most part, they still remained at the bottom of the occupational ladder.<sup>59</sup>

In other areas, too, blacks held the lowest positions. In trade, for example, 320 out of 540 black males were deliverymen or laborers. Among those same numbers there was only one black banker, and there were only seventeen black clerks. In transportation most of the black men were employed as chauffeurs, draymen, teamsters, or expressmen. No blacks could be counted among the city's street railway motormen or locomotive engineers. In addition, there were no black firemen and only three black policemen in a city 414,524 strong. Women were still overwhelmingly occupied in the domestic and personal services. Some 2,063 out of a total black female workforce of 2,804 worked as servants, laundresses, housekeepers, and stewardesses.<sup>60</sup> (See Table III).

### *Living Conditions*

Although the industries of Newark actively sought out southern blacks and welcomed them as common laborers, it became increasingly apparent that blacks were unwelcome as neighbors. The early black community was scattered throughout the city, but as the black population grew residential areas outside the central city became closed to blacks. Helen Pendleton observed soon after the black migration began that "the signs

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<sup>58</sup> *Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920: Population*, IV, pp. 1179-1182.

<sup>59</sup> Jackson, "The Black Experience in Newark," p. 44.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 1180-1182.

Table III

SELECTED OCCUPATIONAL PROFILE  
CITY OF NEWARK - 1920

<u>Occupational Category</u>	<u>Total Jobs Available In Newark</u>	<u>Number Held By Blacks</u>	<u>Percent Held By Blacks</u>	<u>No. Held By Black Males</u>	<u>% Held By Black Males</u>	<u>No. Held By Black Females</u>	<u>% Held By Black Females</u>
Manufacturing & Mechanical Industries	93,626	4,148	4.4	3,529	3.7	619	0.7
Transportation & Trade	35,457	1,681	4.7	1,627	4.6	54	0.1
Public Service	4,194	159	3.8	157	3.7	2	<0.1
Professional Service	8,876	146	1.6	104	1.2	42	0.4
Domestic and Personal Service	13,404	2,815	21.0	752	5.6	2,063	15.4
Clerical Occupations	22,413	148	0.7	125	0.6	23	0.1
Other	360	21	5.8	20	5.6	1	0.2
TOTAL	149,633	5,181	3.5	3,213	2.1	1,968	1.4

Source: *Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1922), III, 1179-1182.

To Let and For Rent in the part of the city where small houses and flats were available were changed to 'For Sale,' and a recent advertisement for rooms, inserted by Negroes, brought only two replies, neither of them from Newark.<sup>61</sup>

Miles W. Beemer, secretary of the State Board of Tenement House Supervision, realized the difficulty for blacks in their search for adequate housing:

It's hard for a colored family to secure decent living apartments, owing to the prejudice of a great many landlords. They are forced to seek the most squalid quarters possible, and even here they are taken advantage of by their home owners. The rents charged them are unfair, and very little is offered them in exchange for their money.<sup>62</sup>

Oddly enough, blacks were often willing to pay higher rents for substandard housing because they felt fortunate even to have a roof over their heads. In 1918, the Board of Commissioners determined that "the influx of laborers for the new city industries brought about a veritable famine in houses."<sup>63</sup> Various inspectors reported massive overcrowding, especially in the "colored sections" of the city. To alleviate the housing shortage the city commission, in 1919, allocated funds to erect a tent colony for hundreds of migrants. As more migrants came to Newark and as residential congestion worsened, the city responded by appropriating additional funds to erect more tents.<sup>64</sup>

While the city government proved inefficient in providing needed services for the black migrants, several organizations attempted to assist the thousands of newcomers to

<sup>61</sup>Pendleton, "Cotton Pickers in Northern Cities," p. 570.

<sup>62</sup>*Newark Evening News*, January 9, 1917.

<sup>63</sup>Newark Board of Commissioners, *Annual Report*, 1918, p. 206.

<sup>64</sup>Board of Commissioners, Minutes of Meetings of the Board of Commissioners of Newark, N.J., 1919 (Newark, N.J.: Essex Press, 1919), p. 57; *Minutes*, 1920, pp. 22-24, cited in Price, "The Beleaguered City as Promised Land," pp. 12-13.

the city. On January 8, 1917, two ministers, one black and one white, formed the Negro Welfare League, the first social organization solely devoted to the welfare of blacks. The initial aim of the Welfare League was to help southern migrants adjust to life in the North, in particular, to aid them in finding and acquiring suitable employment and housing.<sup>65</sup> The Negro Welfare League was not concerned with securing civil rights, it just wanted to insure that blacks had the basic necessities in life.<sup>66</sup> William Ashby, the executive secretary of the League, confirmed that the League "started out more as a social agency, not a civil rights group. It was not a matter of getting rights for Negroes then--it was a matter of keeping them alive."<sup>67</sup>

Keeping the southern black migrants alive was not that simple, though. Stuart Galishoff, author of a book on public health in Newark, contended that "the period 1895-1922 witnessed Newark's greatest advance in public health." During those years Newark's death rate dropped due to "important medical discoveries. . . technological innovations, improving living conditions, and decisive government action to protect the public health."<sup>68</sup> Unfortunately, in 1918 Newark was stricken with an influenza epidemic. Over a three month period from September to November, 1,133 Newarkers, black and white, died from pneumonia attributed to influenza. Ironically, it was safer for young Newark men to fight in the war in Europe than to live in the city; 120 Newarkers

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<sup>65</sup> *Newark Evening News*, January 23, 1917.

<sup>66</sup> For further discussion of the role of institutions in the black community see Chapter Two, Part I, *The Institutional Ghetto*.

<sup>67</sup> *Newark Star-Ledger*, November 15, 1964.

<sup>68</sup> Galishoff, *Safeguarding the Public Health*, pp. 15-16.

were killed in action in Europe, and other 135 died from wounds or other causes.<sup>69</sup>

As blacks were cramped into the already congested residential areas in the central city, health conditions could only get worse. In 1919, the black death rate, twice that of whites was 26 per 1,000 persons. The main causes of death were pneumonia and tuberculosis.<sup>70</sup> The Third Ward, a section populated by a great number of blacks, was also noted for its disease and death. The Hill District led the city in cases of epidemic meningitis, erysipelas, influenza, and tuberculosis.<sup>71</sup> Black infants were often fortunate to live past one year, as the Third Ward's infant mortality rate was among the city's highest. The health of blacks would get worse before it got better, for the black death rate would multiply during the depression due to a higher incidence of tuberculosis among the city's black population.

By 1920 the first wave of southern black migrants had entered the "Promised Land." Between 1920 and 1940, as will be shown in the next chapter, more blacks migrated to Newark. Poor, unskilled, and uneducated the migrants were ill-prepared for life in the North. Likewise, city government, big business, and social agencies lacked the resources to fully accommodate the newcomers. The black migrants inherited the worst sections of the city, and they had to subsist despite poor housing, inadequate health care, and employment at the lowest paying jobs. In 1964 William Ashby was asked to comment on the standard of living for blacks in Newark during the early 1960's. After

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<sup>69</sup>Board of Commissioners, *Annual Report*, 1918, p. 26; Cunningham, *Newark*, p. 261.

<sup>70</sup>Board of Commissioners, *Annual Report*, 1919, p. 216.

<sup>71</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 240-241.

a moment's pause, Ashby retorted, "If you think Negroes live badly now, you should have see it then."<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>72</sup>*Newark Evening News*, October 18, 1964.

## Chapter Two

### The Making of a Ghetto, 1920-1945

The stock market crash of October, 1929, spelled disaster for many Americans, especially for the country's working-class population. In City of Newark, for example, one Ukrainian man assessed the impact of the Great Depression, "I live in a house not fit for rats to live in. I am obliged to eat the cheapest food. . . . As you see, I am wearing rags. And my future? Only an undertaker can tell." An Irish immigrant added, "I'm a lone wolf since the Depression. . . . Right now there isn't an opportunity to make a living."<sup>1</sup> Yet, while working class people suffered, no single group felt the impact of depression more than Afro-Americans. Curtis Lucas, a black novelist, described Newark's Third Ward at the height of the Depression:

Times were hard all over Newark then, but they were hardest in the Third Ward. There were some jobs, but the white man got first call on them, and there were not enough to go around. Colored men and women devised their own ways of making a living. Some of the men took the jobs that the white men did not want, while others scuffled and robbed and stole and pimped. Some colored women took domestic jobs or worked in the laundries. Others went up on Broome Street and sold their bodies. They all got along somehow.<sup>2</sup>

For the black community in Newark, the Great Depression was the most important event of the interwar period. The saliency of depression, though, was made more significant by the events transpiring in Newark before and after the years of the

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<sup>1</sup>Cohen, *America, The Dream of My Life*, pp. 6-7.

<sup>2</sup>Curtis Lucas, *Third Ward Newark* (Chicago: Ziff-Davis Publishing Co., 1946), p. 6.

depression. The turbulence of the interwar and World War II period exposed a black community vacillating between success and failure. Against the background of steady but tenuous progress during the economic boom of the 1920's, the impact of depression delivered a decisive and crushing blow to most of the black community's businesses, organizations, and institutions. As the depression came to a close the black middle class, which had experienced its highest standard of living during the 1920's, was embittered and disillusioned. Mounting pressure from the black middle class manifested itself in a campaign to desegregate Newark before and during the Second World War.

The period from 1920 to the end of World War II, therefore, was a bittersweet era for Newark's black community. After having shown a great deal of vitality in the face of racism, discrimination, and poverty, the black community was devastated by the Great Depression. Despite the promise of the 1920's and the militancy of the 1930's and 1940's, the Great Depression, in the end, decimated Black Newark, and the community never really recovered.<sup>3</sup>

The purpose of this chapter is to trace the development of the black community in Newark during the interwar period. During this period a distinct ghetto formed and a complex ghetto life emerged. In response to the development of the physical ghetto, black leaders built an institutional ghetto in an attempt to organize a community with its own economic, religious, and civic institutions. As the burgeoning black community attempted to survive, it still had to confront the realities of discrimination, racism, poor

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<sup>3</sup>Gary Jardim, ed., "Talkin' Bout A Crisis: The History of Black Newark, An Interview With Clement Price," *Blue: Newark Culture* (Orange, N.J., 1990), pp. 30, 37-38.

housing, inadequate health care, and, ultimately, the Great Depression.

## I

### The Making of a Ghetto

#### *The Physical Ghetto*

Population growth and white hostility created a physical ghetto in Newark's Third Ward between the years 1920 and 1940. The black community grew from 16,977 in 1920 to 45,760 in 1940, or from 4.1 percent to 10.7 percent of the total population.<sup>4</sup> As the black population grew, it became highly concentrated in the Third Ward. Initially, blacks were forced into the Hill District because they were both black and poor. As time passed, though, race, not class, became the determining factor in ghetto formation. "The most significant years for the formation of a black ghetto in Newark," writes Clement A. Price, "were those between 1920 and 1930. . . . In the course of that decade the Hill District, the Third Ward, became the major black settlement in Newark."<sup>5</sup>

Traditionally, blacks in Newark have experienced residential concentration, but they never were subjected to residential segregation.<sup>6</sup> Before racial motivations forced

<sup>4</sup> *Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920: Population*, III, p. 659; United States Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Sixteenth Census of the United States, 1940: Population* (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1943), II, p. 901.

<sup>5</sup> Price, "The Afro-American Community in Newark," p. 46.

<sup>6</sup> The Interracial Committee, "The Negro in New Jersey" (unpublished paper by the Interracial Committee, 1932, pp. 31-32), available at the Newark Public Library.

blacks to live in certain areas, their economic and occupational status determined their place of residence. They, like many southern and eastern European working-class immigrants, often settled in the central city because it had low-rent housing and it was close to the factories. According to the Thirteenth United States Census, 5,411 of the city's 9,029 black residents resided in the contiguous Second, Third, Fourth, and Seventh Wards. Although sixty percent of the total black population lived in those four wards, they still only constituted a small minority of the wards' total population. In the Second, Third, Fourth, and Seventh wards they respectively accounted for only 11.4, 3.6, 7.5, and 6.4 percent of the total population.<sup>7</sup>

As a result of black migration to Newark during and after World War I, the black community no longer remained "a small and dispersed minority in the city's population."<sup>8</sup> Due to housing shortages, racial discrimination, and poverty, settlement outside the central city became virtually impossible. Black migrants continued to settle in the city's central wards, but the most significant increase in the black population occurred in the Third Ward. Between 1910 and 1920 the number of black residents in the Third Ward rose from 1,356 to 3,126; ten years later the black population in the ward skyrocketed to 11,947.<sup>9</sup> By 1940 blacks became even more entrenched on "the Hill," for they now

<sup>7</sup>*Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910: Population*, III, p. 152.

<sup>8</sup>Price, "The Afro-American Community in Newark," p. 13.

<sup>9</sup>Even though black migration to Newark increased between 1910 and 1930, the growth of the black population in the other central wards, the Second, Fourth, and Seventh, was not as conspicuous as in the Third Ward. In fact, between 1910 and 1920, the black population in the Second, Fourth, and Seventh wards respectively increased from only 1,577, 1,037, and 1,441 to 1,777, 1,148, and 1,931. By 1940, when the Third Ward housed 11,947 blacks, the Second, Fourth, and Seventh Wards respectively contained only 2,159, 1,053, and 4,349 black residents. *Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910: Population*, III, p. 152; *Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920: Population*, III, p. 659; *Fifteenth Census of the United States Census, 1930: Population*, III, p. 223.

numbered 16,352, thus bringing to a close a thirty year period of dramatic demographic transformation. In 1910 blacks comprised only 3.7 percent of the ward's total population, but in 1940, 63.2 percent of the ward's inhabitants were black.<sup>10</sup> The Third Ward had become the heart of the physical ghetto. (See Table IV).

In comparison to the formation of ghettos in other cities, Newark's black ghetto closely resembled the black ghetto in Chicago. In both cities a history of black residential concentration predated the formation of a distinct ghetto. While a ghetto was formed between 1900 and 1910 in Chicago, it took another ten years before one was to take shape in Newark. In contrast, New York's blacks took over the previously all-white, middle-class neighborhood in Harlem. Gilbert Osofsky has observed that "Harlem was originally not a slum, but an ideal place in which to live."<sup>11</sup> Newark's centrally located wards, however, had long housed, and continued to house, many of the city's working-class poor, and the neighborhoods were already rundown by the time the majority of southern blacks inhabited them.

Allan Spear, in his study of the black community in Chicago, denies that class was the primary determinant of ghetto formation. He proposes that the development of the physical ghetto was not due entirely to poverty or the desire of blacks to congregate together. Instead, he insists that:

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<sup>10</sup> Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910: Population, III, p. 152; Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920: Population, III, p. 659; Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930: Population, III, p. 223; Sixteenth Census of the United States, 1940: Population, II, p. 901.

<sup>11</sup> Osofsky, *Harlem: The Making of a Ghetto*, p. 11.

Table IV

BLACK PERCENT OF POPULATION IN  
NEWARK'S ELECTORAL WARDS

1910-1940

<u>Year</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>13</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>16</u>	<u>Total</u>
1910	3.0	11.5	3.7	7.5	0.2	1.0	6.3	3.5	1.9	2.5	2.0	*	*	*	3.2	*	2.7
1920	4.3	10.4	8.8	9.2	2.2	2.1	11.3	3.6	4.0	4.9	3.3	0.2	0.4	1.5	9.4	0.6	4.1
1930	5.4	18.3	44.9	15.5	6.0	10.9	30.7	5.5	3.4	8.2	4.1	1.9	0.6	9.8	19.3	2.3	8.8
1940	5.9	19.2	63.2	17.2	4.3	12.5	37.9	5.3	4.3	7.9	4.8	0.8	0.7	15.9	16.7	3.5	10.6

Sources:

*Thirteenth Census of the United States, Population: 1910* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1913), III: 152  
*Fourteenth Census of the United States, Population: 1920* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1922), III: 659  
*Fifteenth Census of the United States, Population: 1930* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1932), III: 223  
*Sixteenth Census of the United States, Population: 1940* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1943), III: 901

The ghetto was primarily the product of white hostility. Attempts on the part of Negroes to seek housing in predominantly white sections of the city met with resistance from the residents and from real estate dealers. Some Negroes, in fact, who had formerly lived in white neighborhoods, were pushed back into the black districts. As the Chicago Negro population grew, Negroes had no alternative but to settle in well-delineated Negro areas.<sup>12</sup>

In Newark, white hostility was an outgrowth of an adverse reaction to the migration of blacks to the city between 1920 and 1930. As the black population grew, blacks were "frequently associated with neighborhood decay, crime, vice and disease. . . . They were frequently seen as undesirable."<sup>13</sup> Although there was not an official caste system in Newark, many white residents attempted to keep the city's blacks in lowly and subordinate positions. Middle and upper-class whites, with the help of local real estate agents, employed restrictive covenants to effectively keep blacks out of their respectable neighborhoods. Many blacks, in addition, knew that certain residential areas were out of bounds. As hostility toward blacks increased, white Newarkers did not want blacks and the problems supposedly associated with their settlement in their communities.

Public agencies and private establishments also practiced discriminatory policies. Although Newark's public schools were desegregated in 1909, many of its civil service positions were closed to blacks. Furthermore, most private establishments favored segregation; for example, the big theaters along Broad and Market Streets allowed blacks to sit only in certain designated sections. Nightclubs and restaurants maintained a "whites only" policy, and most stores along Broad Street would not let black patrons try on

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<sup>12</sup> Spear, *Black Chicago: The Making of a Negro Ghetto*, pp. 26-27.

<sup>13</sup> Clement A. Price, "The Beleaguered City as Promised Land: Blacks in Newark, 1917-1947," in William C. Wright, ed., *Urban New Jersey Since 1870* (Trenton, N.J.: New Jersey Historical Commission, 1975), p. 19.

clothing before purchasing it.<sup>14</sup>

Blacks also faced discrimination in the workplace. Most employers were unwilling to employ blacks, except as a last resort, and in the least desirable and lowest paying occupations. More specifically, many whites objected to blacks securing any kind of skilled position. Still others did not want to have blacks as co-workers, for then they would have to work beside them. In turn, these prejudices found root in unions all over the country, which made it impossible for blacks to win admission to them.

In New Jersey's trade and labor unions the exclusion of blacks was generally unwritten law, although some unions did exclude blacks from their memberships by "constitutional and ritualistic provisions."<sup>15</sup> New Jersey labor unions in 1931 revealed that among the forty-one organized labor unions, with a total membership of 18,019, there were only 268 blacks, a mere 3.3 percent of the total membership.<sup>16</sup> Eight years later, in 1939, 131 local unions answered a questionnaire concerning the racial composition of their membership. The total membership of those 131 unions was 87,480, of which 3,195, or 3.7 percent, was black.<sup>17</sup> Not much progress had been made.

A well delineated black ghetto had taken shape by 1930, and ten years later, with

<sup>14</sup> Clement A. Price, "The Struggle to Desegregate Newark: Black Middle Class Militancy in New Jersey, 1932-1947," *New Jersey History*, 99, (Fall-Winter, 1981), 219-220.

<sup>15</sup> New Jersey Temporary Commission on the Condition of the Urban Colored Population, *Report* (Trenton, N.J.: State of New Jersey, 1939), p. 19.

<sup>16</sup> Egerton Elliott Hall, *The Negro Wage Earner of New Jersey* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1935), pp. 50-51.

<sup>17</sup> Temporary Commission on the Condition of the Urban Colored Population, *Report*, (Trenton, N.J.: State of New Jersey, 1939), p. 19, 97-100.

the Third Ward more than sixty percent black, a definite physical ghetto was in place. Although the term "ghetto" refers to a geographic area in which a group is forced to live in because of race and/or class, the term, as Gilbert Osofsky points out, is also "an impressionistic phrase which summarizes the social, economic, and psychological positions of black people in the city."<sup>18</sup> As demonstrated above, the black community was subjected to discriminatory policies in housing, employment, public accommodations, and private establishments. As the black community was boxed-in, these factors contributed to the saliency of the physical ghetto.

### ***The Institutional Ghetto***

While population growth and white hostility combined to create a physical ghetto in Newark, middle-class blacks responded by building an institutional ghetto. As a complex community comprised of black institutions and organizations emerged, the Third Ward could not be simply considered as an area concentrated by a large number of blacks; it was a viable and vital community.

Traditionally, the most important black institution in Newark was the church; "it has long been considered the most potent and outstanding institution in Negro life."<sup>19</sup> On the eve of World War I there were 14 black churches in the city, but by 1932 the number increased to 34.<sup>20</sup> Bethany Baptist Church, founded in 1871, was the largest and

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<sup>18</sup> Gilbert Osofsky, "The Enduring Ghetto," *Journal of American History*, 55 (September 1968), 243.

<sup>19</sup> United States Works Progress Administration, *The Negro Church in New Jersey* (Hackensack, N.J.: Emergency Education Program, 1938), p. 4.

<sup>20</sup> Interracial Committee of Newark, N.J., "The Negro in Newark" (unpublished paper by the Interracial Committee, 1932), available at the Newark Public Library.

most influential. Bethany, as well as some other middle-class black churches, stressed the importance of black respectability. Toward this end, churches attempted to enforce social control over their congregations. In 1916, a number of Bethany's parishioners were expelled from the church for "living lives unbecoming Christians" and engaging in "conduct unbecoming Christians."<sup>21</sup> Class distinctions were readily apparent in the black community's various religious bodies: "The lighter-colored, well-bred, and more prosperous individuals compose the larger portion of some congregations, while the semi-illiterate dark-skinned manual laborers compose the larger portion of others."<sup>22</sup>

After World War I the older, more established churches faced a considerable challenge from new churches more responsive to southern black migrants. The new arrivals could not afford to build new churches, so they held services in vacant stores. These churches, aptly named storefront cathedrals, "were simply furnished, having rows of canvas back chairs, or rough-hewn chairs." Unlike the more established middle-class congregations, a storefront parish usually did not have a piano or organ. Nevertheless, music was still the highlight of worship, for "being nothing if not resourceful, the Negro sang his rhythmic hymns to the accompaniment of tambourines."<sup>23</sup> In particular, the Baptist congregations were well-known for their brand of religious emotionalism. The revival meetings "had a definite appeal to the more illiterate types. By songs, prayers,

<sup>21</sup>Bethany Baptist Church, "Minutes of the Business Meetings," April 12, 1916, cited in Price, "The Afro-American in Newark," pp. 79-80.

<sup>22</sup>Lee Jackson, "Group Life: The Church," Federal Writers' Project, *New Jersey Ethnic Survey*, May 22, 1941, p. 7, available at the New Jersey Historical Commission, Trenton, New Jersey.

<sup>23</sup>Vivian Mintz, "Negroes in Newark, Chapter III," Federal Writers' Project, *New Jersey Ethnic Survey*, June 29, 1940, p. 3.

testimonies, preaching and shouting, members are stimulated to a frenzy."<sup>24</sup>

According to E. Franklin Frazier the storefront church represented "an attempt on the part of the migrants, especially from the rural areas of the South, to re-establish a type of church in the urban environment to which they were accustomed."<sup>25</sup> The migrants could not identify with the old churches supported by middle-class blacks in Newark, for a code of social mores did not appeal to the black masses. Instead, the storefronts "provided the faithful with a spiritual message that made ghetto life easier in a hostile northern environment."<sup>26</sup> The unique style of worship allowed the communicants to voice their religious zeal and fervor, and to forget momentarily the realities of daily life.<sup>27</sup>

In addition to religious organizations, secular organizations arose in the black community. Initially, they stressed the need for social responsibility. The Newark Negro Welfare League's ambitious goal was "to carry on welfare work for Negroes and to improve their social, economic and moral condition in urban communities."<sup>28</sup> During World War I the Welfare League made a concerted effort to welcome and help the newly arrived southern black migrant. At times, William Ashby, the executive secretary of the Negro Welfare League, and his co-workers succeeded in securing employment for blacks

<sup>24</sup>Jackson, "Group Life: The Church," pp. 8-9.

<sup>25</sup>E. Franklin Frazier, *The Negro Church in America* (New York: Schocken Books, 1963), p. 53.

<sup>26</sup>Price, "The Afro-American Community in Newark," p. 86.

<sup>27</sup>Meier and Rudwick, *From Plantation to Ghetto*, pp. 249-250.

<sup>28</sup>*Newark Evening News*, January 23, 1917

in the city's war industries. Likewise, the League tried to find adequate housing for black families.<sup>29</sup>

Under the weight of an onslaught of southern black migrants the League began, in 1917, to question its role in the city. A.W. MacDougall, from the Bureau of Associated Charities, thought that the League should not be simply concerned with direct relief. Others believed that the League should continue to function as a social welfare agency. After much debate it was decided that the organization was more of an administrative body than an organization concerned with doling out food and shelter. Although the relief feature was not entirely eliminated, it was made subordinate. The League, then, proceeded to devote its energies to interracial cooperation.<sup>30</sup>

The League's focus on interracial cooperation led to the breakdown of many racial barriers in Newark. In 1928, for example, Bamberger's, the city's largest department store, amidst pressure from black and white League members, began to hire black sales clerks. Between 1932 and 1947, the Newark Interracial Council, an organization created under the auspices of the Urban League, helped to desegregate many public and private institutions, most notably Newark City Hospital.<sup>31</sup>

The Newark chapter of the NAACP focused its attentions on the legal status of blacks. According to the national charter, the NAACP's goal was: "To uplift the colored

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<sup>29</sup> William Ashby, *Tales Without Hate* (Newark, N.J.: Newark Preservation and Landmarks Commission, 1980), pp. 88-90.

<sup>30</sup> Negro Welfare League, "Minutes of the Executive Committee," February 5, 1917, available on microfilm at the Newark Public Library.

<sup>31</sup> Price, "The Struggle to Desegregate Newark."

men and women of this country by securing to them the full enjoyment of their rights as citizens, justice in all courts and equality of opportunity everywhere.<sup>32</sup> To this end, the NAACP began "attacking one small aspect of discrimination at a time, hacking away piece by piece at the structure of discrimination."<sup>33</sup> In its first year, 1914, the Newark NAACP protested the screening of "The Birth of a Nation," a film blacks believed was racist and unfair. In 1916, as noted earlier, the local criticized "all respectable restaurants" in the city for excluding black patrons. In 1921, several meetings were held to denounce the formation of the Ku Klux Klan in the state.<sup>34</sup> A year later, the NAACP's thirteenth annual national conference was held at Newark's Sussex Street Armory. Over 3,000 delegates attended, and national anti-lynching legislation was discussed.<sup>35</sup>

The black community did not have much political power in Newark. In 1917, at the height of wartime migration, Newark changed its form of government from a common-council system to a commission form of government. Although the adoption of a new government promised to rid Newark of political corruption and make Government receptive to the people, this new form distanced itself from the city's minorities. City commissioners were elected through non-partisan, city-wide elections. Under this system "blacks never could marshall enough votes to bring one of their numbers into the

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<sup>32</sup> *Newark Evening News*, November 1, 1964.

<sup>33</sup> Meier and Rudwick, *From Plantation to Ghetto*, p. 244.

<sup>34</sup> *Newark Evening News*, November 1, 1964.

<sup>35</sup> *Papers of the NAACP*, "Minutes of the Board of Directors," June 12, 1922; July 10, 1922, available on microfilm, Princeton University.

Commission. . . . [and] since the elections were non-partisan, it was extremely difficult to formulate issues that affected black Newarkers.<sup>36</sup> Blacks in the city were at a political disadvantage, and according to one observer "no Negroes [were] employed in any positions of importance in the city."<sup>37</sup>

While the black community lacked political clout, this does not mean that they were politically inactive. During the 1930's two political organizations surfaced in the Third Ward: the Afro Club and the Third Ward Republican Club. The Afro Club, "the strongest Negro organization of its kind in the state," attracted many upper middle-class blacks. In addition to its political function, the club served a social purpose as well -- "a particular type cafe society has emerged from this setup since the introduction of a modernist bar, and swing music from a nickelodeon."<sup>38</sup> The Third Ward Republican Club, on the other hand, was not as elegant and did not draw its members from the upper-middle class. Both these organizations wielded more power on the ward level than on the city-wide level.

Basically, most migrants did not know the fundamental rights of suffrage. Systematically denied the right to vote in the South, they did not know how to wield political power once they came to the northern cities. Blacks, for the most part, were exploited politically and only expected a few political favors in return for their votes: "A

<sup>36</sup>Price, "The Afro-American Community," p. 157-58. "At-large elections are biased to the extent that they reduce the . . . representation of lower-income people and racial minorities." John J. Harrigan, *Political Change in the Metropolis* (Boston: Scott, Foresman and Co., 1989), pp. 103-104.

<sup>37</sup>New Jersey Conference of Social Work, *The Negro in New Jersey*, p. 64.

<sup>38</sup>E. Johnson, "Organizational Life in the Third Ward," Federal Writers' Project, *New Jersey Ethnic Survey*, June 29, 1940, p. 1.

few dollars during campaign period, a promise of police protection in the operation of 'sporting' houses, or similar 'favors' were all the blacks anticipated.<sup>39</sup> In a symbolic gesture the *New Jersey Herald News*, Black Newark's leading weekly newspaper, sponsored the election of a black mayor. The title, "The Mayor of Springfield Avenue," was bestowed upon a leading member of the black community each year.<sup>40</sup>

It is important, however, to realize that many of these organizations and institutions were rooted in middle-class ideology and did not always incorporate lower class blacks. Ultimately, August Meier questioned the utility of the established black leadership organizations: "Actually, they could do little for the masses of people; middle class in orientation, they had little to offer the urban slum dweller."<sup>41</sup> Nevertheless, their formation did mark a significant chapter in the evolution of Newark's black community.

## II

### The Promise of the 1920's

#### *The Booster Spirit*

For the business and political leaders of Newark the period between 1921 and 1928 was a time of great optimism and hope. Although the city was unable to maintain the sustained growth experienced during World War I, the 1920's did witness the emergence of new industries, most notably the infant electrical and chemical industries.

<sup>39</sup>Vivian Mintz, "Chapter Three: Negroes in Newark," p. 5.

<sup>40</sup>Jardim, ed., "Talkin' Bout A Crisis," *Blue*, pp. 37-38.

<sup>41</sup>Meier and Rudwick, *From Plantation to Ghetto*, p. 242.

The rise of these new industries helped to soften the blow suffered by the decline of Newark's traditional enterprises -- the leather, jewelry, hat, corset, and fertilizer industries.<sup>42</sup> Furthermore, Newark's banking and insurance sector continued to flourish, as the city secured its foothold as the most important financial center in the state.<sup>43</sup>

While Newark experienced industrial and financial growth, the city also expanded physically. The construction of an airport atop the city's unused marshlands was a triumph in effective city planning. Behind the impetus of Mayor Thomas Raymond plans for the new airport were drawn up, and work began in January 1928. Commercial flights soon followed, and by 1931 the airport was considered the world's busiest.<sup>44</sup> Planes, which now circled the city routinely, possessed a bird's-eye view of the massive construction going on beneath them. Invariably, they noticed new skyscrapers now ranging upward of twenty stories, dwarfing older, smaller skyscrapers. New department stores, theaters, and churches continued to clutter downtown.<sup>45</sup>

Underneath the city's economic, industrial, and physical growth lay a spirit of boosterism. The booster spirit, as espoused by the upper class and the political elite, was "an attitude, a frame of mind. . . which demanded that the city develop in every manner

<sup>42</sup>Stellhorn, "Depression and Decline," pp. 12-13.

<sup>43</sup>Paul A. Stellhorn, "Boom, Bust, and Boosterism: Attitudes, Residency and the Newark Chamber of Commerce, 1920-1941," William C. Wright, ed., *Urban New Jersey Since 1970* (Trenton, N.J.: New Jersey Historical Commission, 1975), p. 48.

<sup>44</sup>Cunningham, *Newark*, p. 270.

<sup>45</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 271-275.

of endeavor: economically, civically and socially.<sup>46</sup> William Bittles, the president of the Newark Chamber of Commerce, clearly expressed this notion in one of the Chamber's monthly meetings. In December 1924 he said, "I feel a sense of awakening of a greater civic consciousness in the hearts and minds of our people."<sup>47</sup> Some citizens took Bittles' message to heart. In 1926, for example, Louis Bamberger, owner of the city's largest department store, donated \$750,000 to the city in order to erect a new building to house the Newark Museum.<sup>48</sup> One year later, Thomas N. McCarter, president of the Public Service Corporation, promoted the construction of a new subway system. Although the city would have to build the subway at public expense, McCarter agreed that the system would be operated by Public Service.<sup>49</sup>

#### *Economic Opportunities and Occupational Trends, 1920-1930*

Despite the business optimism in Newark, not all citizens reveled in the booster spirit. "From the vantage point of the black community," writes Clement A. Price, "conditions in the city did not warrant much hope."<sup>50</sup> Following the cessation of hostilities in 1918, Newark entered a mini-recession. Newark's industries no longer had to run at full capacity, and they had a difficult time adjusting to the normal peacetime operations. Blacks, the group who had benefitted most from full employment during the

<sup>46</sup> Stellhorn, "Boom, Bust, and Boosterism," p. 48.

<sup>47</sup> *Newark Evening News*, December 18, 1924.

<sup>48</sup> Cunningham, *Newark*, pp. 272-273.

<sup>49</sup> Stellhorn, "Depression and Decline," p. 21.

<sup>50</sup> Price, "The Afro-American Community in Newark," p. 102.

war, now found that their jobs were suspect. Many blacks were laid off while others were released to make room for returning veterans. Fortunately, the city's industries did not remain stagnant for too long; the economy recovered by 1922.

The Fifteenth United States Census revealed that the black worker and his working conditions improved between 1920 and 1930. During this decade Newark experienced a much greater black influx than during the World War I migration. This migration brought a more industrialized black worker to Newark, for many of the migrants had gained work experience in the South's textile firms and factories.<sup>51</sup> In 1920, blacks made their breakthrough into the manufacturing and mechanical industries, and by 1930, over half of Newark's black males were employed in industry. Although most of the black men were still laborers, there were considerably more blacks employed in skilled and semi-skilled positions than in 1920. A large number of black males worked as brick and stone masons, carpenters, painters, and mechanics. Also, by 1930, there were 118 black firemen, but only 5 black policemen. The employment situation for women improved during the 1920's as well. Although the bulk of women continued to work in domestic and personal services, a number of them held positions in the city's cigar and tobacco factories and its clothing industries.<sup>52</sup>

Even though the number of black professionals in Newark was still small, the 1930 census revealed that their numbers did increase between 1920 and 1930. In 1920

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<sup>51</sup> Interracial Committee of the New Jersey Conference of Social Work, and the State Department of Institutions and Agencies, *The Negro: New Jersey's Twentieth Citizen* (Trenton, N.J.: Department of Institutions and Agencies, 1932), pp. 8-9.

<sup>52</sup> *Fifteenth Census of the United States: 1930, Population*, IV, pp. 1036-39.

there were only 45 ministers, 11 physicians, 8 nurses, and 5 dentists. In 1930, however, there were 80 ministers, 23 physicians, 27 nurses, and 12 dentists. During that decade the number of lawyers and teachers doubled, too.<sup>53</sup> Many ministers came to Newark because they had left the South along with their congregations,<sup>54</sup> and other professionals, especially doctors, lawyers, and dentists, traveled northward because they could setup a successful practice in a well-established black community.<sup>55</sup> Blacks also made progress in the area of business, and by 1930 a greater number of black businesses appeared. Although most businesses catered exclusively to the black community, there were 132 retail dealers, 118 barbers, 84 tailors, 57 salesmen, 25 clerks, 22 restaurant keepers, and 12 undertakers.<sup>56</sup> While progress in employment was minimal in comparison to the strides of white, it was, nevertheless, steady progress. (Table V).

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<sup>53</sup> *Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920: Population*, IV, pp. 1181-82.; *Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930: Population*, IV, pp. 1037-1038.

<sup>54</sup> United States Department of Labor, *The Negro at Work During the World War and Reconstruction* (New York: Negro Universities Press, 1921), p. 90.

<sup>55</sup> Price, "The Beleaguered City as Promised Land," p. 30.

<sup>56</sup> *Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930: Population*, IV, pp. 1037-1039.

Table IV

BLACK PERCENT OF POPULATION IN  
NEWARK'S ELECTORAL WARDS

1910-1940

<u>Year</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>13</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>16</u>	<u>Total</u>
1910	3.0	11.5	3.7	7.5	0.2	1.0	6.3	3.5	1.9	2.5	2.0	*	*	*	3.2	*	2.7
1920	4.3	10.4	8.8	9.2	2.2	2.1	11.3	3.6	4.0	4.9	3.3	0.2	0.4	1.5	9.4	0.6	4.1
1930	5.4	18.3	44.9	15.5	6.0	10.9	30.7	5.5	3.4	8.2	4.1	1.9	0.6	9.8	19.3	2.3	8.8
1940	5.9	19.2	63.2	17.2	4.3	12.5	37.9	5.3	4.3	7.9	4.8	0.8	0.7	15.9	16.7	3.5	10.6

Sources:

*Thirteenth Census of the United States, Population: 1910* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1913), III: 152  
*Fourteenth Census of the United States, Population: 1920* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1922), III: 659  
*Fifteenth Census of the United States, Population: 1930* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1932), III: 223  
*Sixteenth Census of the United States, Population: 1940* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1943), III: 901

### III

#### The Great Depression

The Great Depression wreaked havoc on the City of Newark. "The city emerged from the depression," states Paul A. Stellhorn, "much reduced in prominence and irrevocably set on the path of urban malaise." In fact, Stellhorn argues that "Newark never recovered from the Great Depression."<sup>57</sup> Newark, since the late nineteenth century, had been an industrial giant unyielding in its drive toward economic prosperity. In short, due to its strong industrial base, many thought Newark was invulnerable to economic decline. Yet, Newark's very strength led to its decline:

Today the machine is King. It is a giant, impersonal Frankenstein with an insatiable maw. It demands men and materials. It has been so gorged with both that it has spewn too many finished products on the market. That has been the fundamental cause of the present great depression which has lasted now for five years and may go on for several more.<sup>58</sup>

No matter what the causes of the depression, an inordinate number of Newarkers, especially its working class, suffered from its consequences.

Until the Great Depression there existed in Newark a "vital but fragile black community" full of complexity and vibrancy.<sup>59</sup> As the ghetto grew, more blacks "were able to heed the age-old exhortations of black leaders and newspapers to go into business for themselves."<sup>60</sup> Besides the churches and the secular organizations, the black community had a handful of black banks and more than a dozen black real-estate firms.

<sup>57</sup> Stellhorn, "Depression and Decline," pp. iii-iv.

<sup>58</sup> *Newark Star-Ledger*, November 2, 1935.

<sup>59</sup> Jardim, ed., "Talkin' Bout A Crisis," *Blue*, pp. 37-38.

<sup>60</sup> Wright, *Afro-Americans in New Jersey*, p. 60.

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<sup>60</sup> Wright, *Afro-Americans in New Jersey*, p. 60.

In 1927, the Community Hospital of Newark was established, and black doctors and black nurses had better facilities in which to treat their patients. Among the more successful black-owned establishments were barber shops, beauty parlors, restaurants, pool halls, and funeral parlors.<sup>61</sup>

Clement Price, the foremost historian of Black Newark, was "amazed at the complexity of the black community up until about 1935. . . . Banks, hospitals, real estate firms, a bevy of shops and services. All sorts of organizations." Before 1935, stated Price, "the black community had a spirit."<sup>62</sup> The Great Depression, however, extinguished that spirit, and the black community saw its prospects for the future plummet instead of rise.

In 1931 the Interracial Committee of the New Jersey State Conference on Social Work published a survey in the attempt to discover the true condition of the state's black population. The published results of that study indicated that

the Negroes of New Jersey were denied equal job opportunities, suffered from low income, were forced to live in unsavory neighborhoods and under poor housing conditions even when they were able to pay for more desirable quarters) and suffered as a result from excessive ill-health, delinquency and crime.<sup>63</sup>

Under the stress of the Great Depression the plight of blacks steadily declined. "The last hired and first fired" phenomenon translated into high unemployment rates. In turn, high unemployment prompted thousands of families to seek relief services. The lack of funds and resources often forced social agencies to ignore the needs of blacks. Finally, ghettos

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<sup>61</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 60-64.

<sup>62</sup>Jardim, ed., "Talkin' Bout A Crisis," *Blue*, pp. 37-38.

<sup>63</sup>New Jersey State Temporary Commission on the Condition of the Urban Colored Population, *Report*, p. 1.

deteriorated, and their ancient housing became the breeding ground for disease.

In 1930, the black community constituted 8.8 percent of the total population, but, according to the state's unemployment census, blacks accounted for 17.7 percent of those out of work in 1932.<sup>64</sup> During the decade of depression the black community continued to grow from 38,880 in 1930 to 45,760 in 1940, but the number of blacks employed dropped from 13,308 in 1930 to 7,990 in 1940.<sup>65</sup> As the city seemed to be on its way to economic recovery, the status of the black worker did not improve. By 1940 most black males and females were still employed as laborers in the city's industries. Black women, for the most part, returned to domestic work, as over sixty percent now worked in that capacity. A large portion of the black males worked as truck drivers and deliverymen, or janitors and porters.<sup>66</sup> (See Table VI).

Between 1932 and 1940 three New Deal programs came to New Jersey, the Emergency Relief Administration (E.R.A.), the Works Progress Administration (W.P.A.), and the Public Works Administration (P.W.A.). Mayor Meyer Ellenstein "lost no time in laying claim to Newark's share of the relief pie," as he sent a "shopping list" to the federal government.<sup>67</sup> The money received from the W.P.A. and the P.W.A. went toward capital projects targeted at the improvement of Newark's subway, seaport, water,

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<sup>64</sup> *Fifteenth Census of United States, 1930: Population*, IV, pp. 1036-1039; Temporary Commission on the Condition of the Urban Colored Population, *Report*, p. 79.

<sup>65</sup> *Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930: Population*, IV, pp. 1036-1039; *Sixteenth Census of the United States, 1940: Population*, II, pp. 205-210.

<sup>66</sup> *Sixteenth United States Census, 1940: Population*, III, pp. 205-210.

<sup>67</sup> Stellhorn, "Depression and Decline," pp. 219-221.

Table VI

## SELECTED OCCUPATIONAL PROFILE

## CITY OF NEWARK - 1940

<u>Occupational Category</u>	<u>Total Jobs Available In Newark</u>	<u>Number Held By Blacks</u>	<u>Percent Held By Blacks</u>	<u>No. Held By Black Males</u>	<u>% Held By Black Males</u>	<u>No. Held By Black Females</u>	<u>% Held By Black Females</u>
Operatives & Kindred Workers	42,364	3,042	7.2	2,061	4.9	981	2.3
Craftsmen, Foremen, & Kindred Laborers	22,170	768	3.5	747	3.4	21	0.1
Proprietors, Mgrs. & Officials	11,480	2,736	23.8	2,653	23.1	83	0.7
Professionals/Semiprofessionals	12,263	257	2.1	215	1.8	42	0.3
Service Workers	11,370	288	2.5	188	1.6	100	0.9
Domestic Workers	11,878	1,634	13.8	1,157	9.7	477	4.1
Clerical, Sales, & Kindred Protective Service Workers	5,899	3,519	59.7	152	2.6	3,367	57.1
Other	35,470	406	1.1	326	0.9	80	0.2
TOTAL	158,764	12,993	8.2	7,745	4.9	5,248	3.3

Source: *Sixteenth Census of the United States, 1940* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1943), II, Pt. 4: 205-206, 209

street, sewer, and airport facilities. In 1936, the various projects created 9,000 new jobs.<sup>68</sup> For many Newarkers the arrival of the W.P.A. and the P.W.A. was a godsend.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt, in 1935, told W.P.A. state administrators that "we cannot discriminate in any of the work we are conducting either because of race or religion or politics."<sup>69</sup> The President's words, however, did not deter the local administrators from excluding blacks from the programs. In 1938, according to data collected by the State Financial Assistance Commission, blacks in Newark, representing 9.2 percent of the city's population, made up 37.5 percent of the relief cases. Blacks, though, accounted for only 17.6 percent of the cases transferred to Works Progress Administration jobs.<sup>70</sup>

The black community in Newark could not turn to the city's social agencies for help either. The Salvation Army did not "encourage them [blacks] to participate in the activities" due to the "lack of sufficient funds and space." The Salvation Army, therefore, referred blacks to the New Jersey Urban League on the premise that "trouble arises when the two races are housed in the same dormitory." One of the organization's executives declared, "generally speaking, the Salvation Army does not cater to Negroes for they

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<sup>68</sup>Ibid.

<sup>69</sup>Leslie H. Fishel, Jr., "The Negro in the New Deal," *Wisconsin Magazine of History*, 48 (Winter 1964), 116.

<sup>70</sup>Temporary Commission on the Condition of the Urban Colored Population, *Report*, pp. 17, 85.

might dominate it if programs were initiated.<sup>71</sup> The Goodwill Mission, the other large lodging house in the city, also refused to quarter blacks, and the Red Cross Chapter denied blacks assistance, too.<sup>72</sup>

In New Jersey, as well as in Newark, "the depression. . . wrecked the living conditions of the Negro population."<sup>73</sup> Moreover, the depression had an adverse effect on the health and survival of the black community in Newark. In 1932, Beatrice A. Myers and Ira De A. Reid conducted a study analyzing the relationship between New Jersey's black population and the incidence of tuberculosis. Their disturbing results documented a correlation between racial discrimination and inferior health conditions among the state's black population.

The black population in Newark, despite improvements in medicine and health care, was being ravaged by tuberculosis; blacks were dying at much higher rates from the disease than whites. Even in the city's central wards blacks suffered disproportionately. In the Third Ward, for example, between the years 1927 and 1929, the black mortality rate from tuberculosis was 282.7 per 100,000 persons, which was three and one-third times the white rate for the ward, 84.2.<sup>74</sup>

Myers and Reid concluded that: "a high tuberculosis death rate among the Negroes is

<sup>71</sup>"Report of the New Jersey State Temporary Commission on the Urban Colored Population: A Study of 5,368 Urban Negro Families" (Trenton, N.J.: State of New Jersey, 1939) cited in Jackson, "The Black Experience in Newark," 46-49.

<sup>72</sup>Price, "The Afro-American Community in Newark," p. 115.

<sup>73</sup>Temporary Commission on the Condition of the Urban Colored Population, *Report*, p. 2.

<sup>74</sup>Beatrice A. Myers and Ira De A. Reid, "The Toll of Tuberculosis Among Negroes in New Jersey," *Opportunity*, 10 (September 1932), 279-282.

a societal indictment, and a heavy one, is apparent from one glance at the crude death rate.<sup>75</sup> The high rate of tuberculosis among the black community was indicative, even symbolic of the black experience in Newark thus far. "Like infant mortality," contends Stuart Galishoff, "tuberculosis is a weather vane of social conditions. . . the incidence of tuberculosis is closely tied to socioeconomic conditions."<sup>76</sup>

## IV

### **The Forgotten Years: Black Middle Class Militancy**

The emergence of a black middle class in Newark was one of the most significant developments of the interwar period. During the 1920's black professionals and black businessmen settled in the city, bringing with them to the black community their respective practices and businesses. After the shock of the depression many of those practices and businesses were either shattered or on the verge of collapse. However, as the depression came to an end, those who managed to survive and new black middle-class arrivals to the city joined together in a protest movement guided by a new spirit of militancy. The disillusionment of the Great Depression era, coupled with the promise of the New Deal, roused middle-class blacks to challenge the two forces which had made them second-class citizens in Newark for the past thirty years: racial segregation and job discrimination. The movement gained momentum during World War II, as Black

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<sup>75</sup>Ibid.

<sup>76</sup>Galishoff, *Safeguarding the Public Health*, p. 121.

Americans professed the desire for the "Double V," the victory over Nazism and the victory over segregation.

Between 1910 and 1930 professional blacks in Newark looked to interracial cooperation to solve its problems as professional blacks and liberal whites joined forces to form a number of interracial groups. Although some strides were made, these interracial groups did not concentrate their energies on civil rights activities or organized protest. Instead, they relied on a type of clientage politics in which a small number of blacks formed close relationships with prominent whites of the city.<sup>77</sup> The friendly relationship fostered between William Ashby and Mr. and Mrs. Felix Fuld was a prime example of clientage politics. On a number of occasions Ashby sought advice and financial help from the Fulds, and they, in turn, responded generously. In 1928, under the auspices of Felix Fuld, the nephew of Louis Bamberger, black sales clerks were hired by Bambergers for the first time.

The Great Depression, the promise of the New Deal, and the fight for justice during the Second World War radicalized the black community, and as a result race militancy replaced interracial cooperation as the major strategy in addressing black grievances. A new youthful leadership comprised of middle-class blacks became disgusted with the city's Jim Crow policies, and they were determined to eradicate them.

The long and protracted battle to desegregate the medical staff at Newark City Hospital between 1932 and 1946, therefore, was the culmination of interracial cooperation in the city. At the same time that blacks and whites were desegregating City Hospital,

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<sup>77</sup>Price, "The Struggle to Desegregate Newark," p. 218.

race consciousness began to undermine interracial cooperation. During the war years, 1939-1945, blacks in Newark experienced a rising spirit of race militancy. The transition from cooperative strategies to more militant techniques proved extremely significant for Newark's black community. The role of the new black middle-class leadership can not be underestimated during this period.

As late as 1937, the Newark Interracial Council stated, "At present time there is not a private or public hospital in Newark in which the Negro physician may intern or practice, or Negro nurse receive training."<sup>78</sup> Almost ten years later, in January 1946, a black woman, Dr. E. Mae McCarrol of Newark, was asked to join City Hospital's medical staff. The pure length of the battle to desegregate the hospital's medical staff exposed the inadequacies of mild and tempered interracial cooperation. Controversy and confrontation were avoided at all costs. Results rarely came expeditiously.

Historian Richard M. Dalfiume has labeled the years 1939 to 1945, the "forgotten years" because their importance to blacks in the United States have often been neglected. The World War II years, according to Dalfiume, "provided American Negroes with a unique opportunity to point out, for all to see, the difference between the American Creed and practice." Dalfiume continued:

The democratic ideology and rhetoric with which the war was fought stimulated a sense of hope and certainty in black Americans that the old race structure was destroyed forever. In part, this confidence was also the result of the mass militancy and race consciousness that developed in these years. When the expected white acquiescence in a new racial order did not occur, the ground was prepared for the civil rights revolution of the 1950's and the 1960's; the seeds were indeed sown in the World War II years.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Newark Evening News, March 20, 1937.

<sup>79</sup> Richard M. Dalfiume, "The 'Forgotten Years' of the Negro Revolution," *The Journal of American History*, LV (June 1968), p. 106.

During the war years in Newark a series of successful civil rights activities and protests transpired in which the role of blacks predominated. Liberal whites were not called upon to participate especially when protests were confined to the Third Ward.

In a jim-crow city like Newark, whether blacks were rich or poor, well-educated or ignorant, one fact transcended all: if you were black, you were discriminated against. Notwithstanding the economic, occupational, or social status of a black person he was forced to sit in certain sections of the downtown theaters; he could not reserve a table at the better restaurants or claim a bar stool at certain night clubs; and he could not try on a garment in certain clothing stores without first purchasing it.<sup>80</sup> In Europe, Nazism and anti-Semitism were being conquered on the battlefield, but racism and discrimination still existed in Newark.

The black leadership constantly criticized the hypocrisy in the United States' fight for democracy. The armed forces were still segregated. The Red Cross segregated blood given by white donors from blood given by black donors. War related industries in some cities would not hire blacks. Nevertheless, many young black males crossed the Atlantic to fight the Germans, and others left for the Pacific to help defeat the Japanese. Many believed that black troops were off to fight "the white man's war."

On the home front blacks rallied behind such slogans as "Double Victory," "Victory at Home as Well as Abroad," and "Defeat Hitler, Mussolini and Hirohito by

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<sup>80</sup>Price, "The Afro-American Community in Newark," p. 142; Price, "The Struggle to Desegregate Newark," pp. 219-20.

Enforcing the Constitution and Abolishing Jim Crow.<sup>81</sup> On the national scene, A. Philip Randolph, president of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, pledged that the nation's blacks would march on Washington, D.C in early 1941 unless President Roosevelt ended discrimination in defense industries. The March on Washington Movement exerted enough pressure to force Roosevelt to issue Executive Order 8802 which prohibited racial discrimination in defense employment.<sup>82</sup>

On a smaller scale, blacks in Newark fought discrimination in their own city. Immediately before and after the outbreak of war, the black community was in the midst of a protest movement against retail stores in the city. Blacks organized "Don't-But-Where-You-Cannot-Work" campaigns. More specifically, the Newark Council of the National Negro Congress picketed the F. and W. Five and Ten Cent Store on Springfield Avenue in the Third Ward because the store refused to hire blacks. It was an exclusively black protest. Arthur Hardy, the director of the Court Street YMCA, felt that the protest inaugurated a new era in race militancy for Newark's black community. He said:

When I heard of the Grand Store picketing, I wanted to throw my hat in the air. It is the beginning. The Negro at last is dropping his slave psychology and is seeking to do something for himself. He no longer expects the whites to do [it] for him and that's a healthy change.<sup>83</sup>

Behind the impetus of this new attitude, the black community in Newark would abolished most of the jim-crow practices in the city by the early 1950's.

The turbulence of the interwar and World War II period makes it a difficult era

<sup>81</sup>John W. Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986), p. 177.

<sup>82</sup>Dalfiume, "The Forgotten Years," pp. 98-99.

<sup>83</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 224.

to assess. The economic progress of the 1920's and the black militancy of the 1930's and 1940's proved to be the period's highlights. The formation of a distinct ghetto, albeit by way of racism and discrimination, seemed to be a triumph as well. A city within a city, dependent on its own people, businesses, institutions, and organizations, was built. The By 1935, though, the spirit of the black ghetto no longer existed. The era's dark spot, the Great Depression, proved too strong a force for the vital but fragile black community to overcome.

## Chapter Three

### The Second Ghetto: Trapped in the Promised Land

The days following the conclusion of the Second World War held boundless optimism. After a thirty-year period spanning two bloody wars and the greatest depression the country had ever known, many Americans believed that the state of the nation could only improve. Expectations ran high as the United States successfully defended the Four Freedoms. The prospects for peace, prosperity, and economic expansion seemed as sure as the surrender of the Germans and Japanese. Beneath a sense of postwar optimism, however, lay an uneasiness about the country's future. The changes unfolding in the nation's cities were monumental. In retrospect, the postwar era proved to be a watershed for all urban centers:

Every American city faced sweeping changes when World War II ended, but few could see in 1946 how radical the changes would be. Great areas of blight would stab at the public conscience, civil rights leaders would demand redress of century-old wrongs and industry would join residents in a flight to the suburbs.<sup>1</sup>

Newark, the nation's third oldest city, reflected the urban postwar experience in microcosm, for Newark "embodie[d] in intense form nearly everything that [was] happening in urban America. It might also be called the city that became a ghetto."<sup>2</sup>

Between 1920 and 1940 the rise of a distinct ghetto, distinguished by a vital black

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<sup>1</sup>Cunningham, *Newark*, p. 298.

<sup>2</sup>George W. Groh, *The Black Migration: The Journey to Urban America* (New York: Weybright and Talley, 1972), p. 157.

community, marked life in Black Newark. In the subsequent period, 1945 and 1967, the second ghetto, distinguished by its tragic and enduring nature, replaced the first ghetto and soon became a sprawling slum. Between 1950 and 1960 the black population rose in neighborhoods contiguous to the city's Central Ward (previously the Third Ward). As large numbers of blacks entered white and mixed neighborhoods, the white residents fled to neighborhoods on the periphery of the Central Ward. By 1970 the neighborhoods surrounding the Central Ward became part of the black ghetto. While the formation of the first ghetto took place during a time of prosperity, the development of the second ghetto coincided with Newark's modern decline.

Faced with the increasingly apparent reality of urban decline, the City of Newark sought to foster a "carefully cultivated image that suggested an aging city that was somehow keeping the forces of decay, if not at bay, then under reasonable control."<sup>3</sup> The effective use of positive rhetoric enabled City Hall to portray Newark as a business and commercial hub. City officials actively recruited businesses to make their homes in the city lauded as "The City of Progress," "The City in Transition," and "New Newark." More importantly, positive rhetoric depicted Newark as the city most closely approaching the ideal of racial harmony; in 1962 a pollster encouraged Mayor Addonizio to adopt "Peace in Our Town" as a campaign slogan. Race relations in Newark had always been amiable, and the city, unlike other large urban centers in the North, had never experienced a full-scale race riot. By 1960, however, a number of forces had combined to form Newark's second ghetto, and these forces proceeded to destroy the myth of prosperity and

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<sup>3</sup>Stanley B. Winters, ed., *From Riot to Recovery: Newark Ten Years After* (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, Inc., 1979), p. 1.

racial harmony so carefully cultivated by City Hall. By the mid-1960's the seeds of discontent were sown, and the City of Newark was ripe for rebellion.

The purpose of this chapter is to explain how a period which held great promise for Newark led to irreversible urban decay and the making of the second ghetto. The emerging second ghetto sapped the first ghetto of its vitality and vibrancy, for the institutions characteristic of the first ghetto became obsolete. Its leadership lost its strength and vigor. Likewise, the expansion of the ghetto was carried out with federal and local government support. The black ghetto expanded, but it was successfully maintained and reinforced through public housing and urban renewal programs. Inner-city blacks became locked in the prison-like atmosphere of the vertical ghetto. It became a tragic, enduring entity.

## I

### Newark: Post World War Two

After the celebrations of V-E Day and V-J Day were over, Newark, like most American cities, hoped to lead its people into an era of peace and prosperity. City officials and business leaders concentrated on establishing Newark as an attractive place to live, work, and locate a business. Between 1946 and 1960 the city developed at a fierce pace. By the mid-1950's Newark could boast of a number of accomplishments, for the city exhibited a thriving seaport, a booming airport, and a strong financial leadership. It also became the home to new industries and a center for higher education.

In 1946, the Port Authority of New York bought the leases of Newark Airport and Port Newark and poured millions of dollars into their development. In 1953 and 1955

Mutual Benefit Life and the Prudential, Newark's two largest insurance companies, linked their futures to the city when they built new office buildings opposite each other overlooking Washington Park. Likewise, Anheuser Busch, one of the nation's largest brewers, planned the construction of a new \$20 million plant. Rutgers and Seton Hall Universities, along with Newark College of Engineering, decided to build new campuses in Newark.<sup>4</sup>

There were few pessimists in Newark during the late 1940's and throughout the 1950's. In 1953, a coalition of civic, labor, and business groups advocated the adoption of a new city charter which would create a mayor-council form of government. Furthermore, plans for redevelopment of the city's dilapidated areas stimulated a "New Newark" movement. Such grandiose plans, though, overshadowed a number of tell-tale signs indicating inevitable decay.

In 1939, Harland Bartholomew and Associates, the nation's leading urban planning firm, prepared a report for the City of Newark and its postwar outlook. The report revealed that Newark had been a city in decline for quite some time. By 1939, Newark had already lost its vaunted reputation as New Jersey's largest employer. In 1909 the city held twenty-five percent of all jobs in New Jersey; thirty years later the number of jobs dwindled to eleven percent. Wages declined steadily, too. Despite the housing construction boom during the postwar years, Newark's property values dropped markedly. Tax rates soared and City Hall's budget swelled. While some large companies decided to remain in Newark, hundreds more left for the suburbs. Despite the obvious signs of

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<sup>4</sup>Cunningham, *Newark*, pp. 302-311.

decline, prosperity, for the time being, obscured decay.<sup>5</sup>

### *Race Relations*

Shortly after the end of World War II virtually all the vestiges of Jim Crow practices in Newark had been eradicated. The Elmwood Theatre, for example, stopped segregating blacks to one side of the movie house, and other theaters no longer banished blacks to its balconies. The Far Eastern Restaurant, a downtown Chinese establishment, accommodated its first black customers in 1950. Reverend William P. Hayes became the first black chairman of the board of commissioners of the Newark Housing Authority. During the late 1940's and early 1950's, Herbert H. Tate and Mary Burch, two black Newarkers, served on the city's Board of Education. By 1954 black politicians were elected to the City Council.<sup>6</sup>

In 1957 the Mayor's Commission on Group Relations published a preliminary report detailing the nature of race relations in Newark. The report, *Group Relations in Newark, 1957*, recognized the rapid progress of the city's minority groups: "In the past generation, a quiet, bloodless revolution has altered the status of these minority groups . . . One by one, limitations have been removed and avenues of opportunity opened."<sup>7</sup> Part of the Commission's findings boasted:

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<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 299-301.

<sup>6</sup>Robert Curvin, "Black Ghetto Politics in Newark After World War II," in Joel Schwartz and David Prosser, eds. *Cities of the Garden State: Essays in the Urban and Suburban History of New Jersey* (Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company, 1977), pp. 151-154.

<sup>7</sup>Chester Rapkin and Eunice and George Grier, *Group Relations in Newark, 1957: Problems, Prospects, and a Program for Research* (New York: Mayor's Commission on Group Relations, 1957), p. 1.

Newark's public record in establishing and protecting the civil rights of all groups is exceptionally fine even among northern cities. Hotels, restaurants, bowling alleys, and swimming pools are open without question to Negroes and Puerto Ricans, as to other citizens. Barrier after barrier to the employment of minorities in offices, factories, and laboratories has fallen. . . .<sup>8</sup>

In addition, Newark had built more public housing than most other cities its size, and, as one local black leader pointed out, "a more sincere effort has been made to promote and maintain integrated housing than in any other city in the country."<sup>9</sup>

Amidst the promise of some of the report's observations, though, were warning signs which could not be ignored. The passage of new laws and court decisions protecting the rights of minorities did not always translate into actual practice. While most establishments were open to blacks, blacks knew that some places were still off-limits. Mixed housing usually meant the existence of two different buildings: one entirely white and one entirely black. Although there was more dispersion of blacks in the city, there was also considerable concentration. Blacks also had trouble financing the purchase of new homes, for local banks did not readily approve their loans. The movement of blacks into white neighborhoods was often vehemently opposed. In some instances unions still excluded blacks.<sup>10</sup> Nonetheless, the 1957 report concluded: "More affirmatively, there is positive evidence that Negroes and whites are learning to live in harmony and mutual respect in more and more areas of Newark's life."<sup>11</sup>

Two years later, in 1959, a follow-up report was issued by the Mayor's

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 62.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup>*Newark Evening News*, September 29, 1957.

<sup>11</sup>*Group Relations in Newark, 1957*, p. 70.

Commission on Group Relations. This study surveyed the heads of households in Newark concerning inter-group relations.<sup>12</sup> A series of questions suggesting discrimination against blacks in the areas of employment, political rights, and residential segregation were presented to white respondents for agreement or disagreement. The survey revealed that 64 percent of the heads of Newark's white households supported housing discrimination against blacks. But while the majority of whites did not want blacks living in the same neighborhoods as them, blacks were not overwhelmingly denied access to employment and political office.<sup>13</sup>

Racial tension was another topic studied. The report concluded that "the opinions of the citizens of Newark, both white and Negro, indicate that there is no prevailing atmosphere of inter-group strife in the city."<sup>14</sup> A surprisingly small number believed that whites and blacks did not get along together (14 percent of the whites, and only 5 percent of the blacks). Blacks and whites who felt that racial tensions existed were more often well-educated and from upper socio-economic levels. For the most part, though, "the majority of both whites and Negroes feel that the races 'always got along' in Newark."<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>The 1957 report entitled *Group Relations in Newark-1957* was based on a series of interviews with authorities in various fields. The second report delivered by the commission on Group Relations in 1959, *Newark: A City in Transition*, is not a compilation of what the experts thought about group relations in Newark. Instead over 4,000 interviews were conducted throughout Newark in an attempt to understand what the "man in the street" felt about the situation in the city. Ultimately, the climate of group relations derives from the attitudes of the mass citizenry, not the so-called experts.

<sup>13</sup>Mayor's Commission on Group Relations, *Newark: A City in Transition*, II, (March 1959), pp. 20-50.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 52, 70.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, III, p. 27.

According to James A. Pawley, director of the Essex County Urban League, "Negroes in Newark were finding things pretty nice after World War II. Newark was a good place to come to."<sup>16</sup> Although Pawley considered inter-group relations in Newark to be "very good," he warned that the city was "fortunate" that isolated racial incidents "have not caused a large-scale riot outbreak, as in Chicago or Detroit."<sup>17</sup> Pawley was probably referring to a string of racial incidents in the city beginning with the war years.

In June 1943 a black teenager, fifteen-year-old Milton Heily, was shot in the back while fleeing from a group of white attackers in the city's First Ward. The cause of the murder was the result of a racial clash following a track meet at Newark's City Stadium.<sup>18</sup> Later in the month blacks rioted in Detroit, and in August blacks rebelled in Harlem. Nine years later, in 1952, black children were routinely threatened and molested at Newark's McKinley School. Charles Allen of the Newark Teachers Union indicated that such incidents were "symptoms that may, at any moment, break out into race riots. Unless citizens do something about it, we are going to have race riots like those in Detroit."<sup>19</sup>

The prevailing attitude in Newark, however, was one of racial harmony. Throughout the 1940's and 1950's blacks and whites alike believed that Newark was a special city. Unlike Detroit, Harlem, and Chicago, the city was not scarred by racial war.

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<sup>16</sup>*Newark Evening News*, December 20, 1967.

<sup>17</sup>*Newark Star-Ledger*, July 17, 1956.

<sup>18</sup>*New Jersey Afro-American*, June 12, 1943.

<sup>19</sup>*Newark Star-Ledger*, December 9, 1952.

When the country began to heat up over the civil rights movement, Newark still remained peaceful. The city's residents prided themselves on amiable race relations. Toward the end of the "Long, Hot Summer of 1964" one black resident of Newark exclaimed:

However, there will absolutely, positively be no race riots in our city . . . The plain fact is that the overwhelming majority of our colored community is peace-loving and extremely proud and grateful for the tremendous progress being made on all fronts. . . in the fields of human rights and civil liberties. . . our colored community will. . . deal with those who would now attempt to lead it back down the rock-strewn, thorny path over which it so laboriously and tragically traveled for so many years.<sup>20</sup>

## II

### **The Making of the Second Ghetto**

A number of forces contributed significantly to the making of the second ghetto in Newark between 1945 and 1967: the dual migration, suburbanization, and ghettoization. In addition, the support of racist and segregationist policies by federal and local housing authorities encouraged the flight of whites to the suburbs and led directly to the decay of the inner city. Likewise, the fatal decision to build a vertical ghetto undermined the chances of the black ghetto's survival.

#### ***The Dual Migration***

The most comprehensive demographic change of the post-World War II era has been the dual migration. The first part of the dual migration was the in-migration of a large number of poor rural blacks from the South to northern cities, while the second phase witnessed an out-migration of whites from those cities to the suburbs.

As the United States prepared for war, the unemployment rate in Newark dropped

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<sup>20</sup>*New Jersey Afro-American*, August 15, 1964.

considerably. The resurgence of the city's war industries benefitted the black community immensely, for the black work force, a mere 7,990 in the summer of 1940, rose to 25,000 in 1945.<sup>21</sup> Newark's factories operated on round-the-clock shifts, and black migrants seeking employment flooded to the city once again. Less than 7,000 blacks settled in Newark between 1930 and 1940, but with the impetus of industrial growth, nearly 30,000 blacks ventured to Newark between 1940 and 1950.<sup>22</sup>

Despite the attractive employment opportunities available in Newark's industries, George Groh, in his book, *The Black Migration*, determined that "Rural expulsion, not urban attraction, has long since become the controlling factor in the black trek to the cities."<sup>23</sup> Starting in the 1940's and continuing through the 1950's, the onslaught of rapid mechanization and technological advances rapidly diminished the need for agricultural workers in the South. New technology enabled farm machinery to pick cotton faster, cheaper, and more efficiently than the human hand. Rural blacks, faced with less chance of survival in the South, travelled to the North in pursuit of security.

While economic necessity prompted many blacks to leave the South, they often adopted an idealistic and romantic approach to their journey "up North." Like black migrants before them, many felt that rural exodus would lead them to the "Promised Land." They believed that in the North there would be no more cotton fields, no more

<sup>21</sup>Newark Housing Authority, *Migrant War Workers in Newark* (Newark, N.J.: Newark Housing Authority, 1944), p. 11.

<sup>22</sup>*Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930: Population*, III, p. 223; *Sixteenth Census of the United States, 1940: Population*, II, p. 901; *Seventeenth Census of the United States, Population: 1950* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1952), II, Part 30, p. 70.

<sup>23</sup>Groh, *The Black Migration*, p. 68.

domineering masters, no more sunup-to-sundown working hours. In *Manchild in the Promised Land*, Claude Brown described the lure of the northern city:

These migrants were told that unlimited opportunities for prosperity existed in [the North] and that there was no "color barrier" there. They were told that Negroes lived in houses with bathrooms, electricity, running water, and indoor toilets. To them this was the "promised land" that Mammy had been singing about in the cotton fields for many years.<sup>24</sup>

Rural blacks travelled to the North in unprecedented numbers. According to a passenger agent for the Seaboard Railroad, extra jim-crow cars had to be attached to trains headed north in order to accommodate the mass of exodusters. Likewise, a bus operator reported: "We hardly had enough seats for the whites folks. 'Nigras' took up so much room in the back of our buses."<sup>25</sup>

Between 1940 and 1970 Newark's population turned color, during those years the city's black population skyrocketed from 45,760 to 207,458, and the city's white population plummeted from 383,534 to 168,382. According to the 1940 census, Newark's black population accounted for 10.7 percent of the city's total population; by 1950, blacks were 17.2 percent of the total population, and by 1960, that percentage doubled to 34.1. In 1960, whites out-numbered blacks by a two-to-one margin; by 1970, the black population became a majority of 54.2 percent.<sup>26</sup>

"Everybody that can get out, gets out. Nobody in their right mind stays. It's a

<sup>24</sup>Claude Brown, *Manchild in the Promised Land* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1965), p. 7.

<sup>25</sup>New Jersey Afro-American, November 27, 1943.

<sup>26</sup>Sixteenth Census of the United States, Population: 1940, II, p. 901; Seventeenth Census of the United States, Population: 1950, II, Part 30, p. 70; Eighteenth Census of the United States, Population: 1960, Part 32, p. 95; Nineteenth Census of the United States, Population, 1970, Part 32, p. 71.

dying city, and you don't want to die with it."<sup>27</sup> Such was the sentiment of a long-time resident of Newark in 1971. White flight to the suburbs, though, began in earnest during the 1940's.<sup>28</sup> It continued unabated throughout the 1950's and up through the 1970's. As southern blacks entered the city in the postwar years, whites began to leave at an alarming rate; by 1967 some suburban communities outside Newark quadrupled their population as white Newarkers moved out.<sup>29</sup> Between 1960 and 1970 the net out-migration of whites from Newark to its suburbs added up to a total 106,500; four out of every ten white residents living in the city in 1960 left Newark by 1970.<sup>30</sup>

Some of Newark's business elite abandoned the city for the suburbs even before the First World War, but the majority of the middle class remained because they could not afford to move. This changed, however, in 1934, when Congress created the Federal Housing Administration (FHA), and ten years later the FHA was joined by the Veterans Administration (VA). Together they revolutionized the home finance industry because they enabled many middle-class Newarkers to purchase new homes in the suburbs with

<sup>27</sup>Louis H. Masotti and Jeffrey K. Madden, *Suburbia in Transition* (New York: The New York Times Company, 1974), p. 66.

<sup>28</sup>There were signs of white flight to the suburbs before World War I, however. The city's business elite, while still active in the city, chose to live outside its limits. In 1936, Thomas N. McCarter, president of the Public Service Corporation, believed that this trend was detrimental to Newark's future development. He said: "One of the troubles of Newark, as I see it, is that so many of those who are active in its affairs, though they work in the city, live outside of it. Of this class, I was, I am sorry to say, an early offender and sinner." The number of "offenders and sinners" would grow in the ensuing decades. A number of Newark's businesses would escape to the suburbs, too. *Newark Star-Eagle*, April 16, 1936.

<sup>29</sup>*Newark Evening News*, December 19, 1967.

<sup>30</sup>*New York Times*, February 20, 1972.

a long-term, low-down-payment, FHA-insured mortgage loan.<sup>31</sup> Unfortunately, the departure of many of Newark's white residents "hastened the decay of inner-city neighborhoods by stripping them of much of their middle-class constituency."<sup>32</sup> Some of Newark's white working-class elements would seek and find refuge in the suburbs, too.

The FHA's real-estate appraisal methods, adopted from the Home Owners Loan Corporation (HOLC), undervalued neighborhoods that were old, dense, and racially mixed. The appraisal system, biased toward new, spacious, and racially segregated neighborhoods, naturally favored construction in the suburbs. In 1939, federal appraisers, on a scale from "A" to "D," did not rate one neighborhood in Newark an "A." The Weequahic, Clinton Hill, Vailsburg, and Forest Hill sections of the city each received a "B" rating, while the well-maintained working-class districts of Roseville, Woodside, and East Vailsburg were given "C" ratings. The rest of the city, including the Ironbound and every black neighborhood, was labelled "hazardous."<sup>33</sup> Such ratings deterred the FHA from insuring new construction and renovation projects in the inner-city.

The FHA's government-backed mortgages were accused of being racist as well. Until 1948 the agency honored restrictive covenants in deeds that prohibited the sale of property to non-whites.<sup>34</sup> The FHA, concerned with "inharmonious racial or nationality groups," determined that "if a neighborhood [was] to retain stability, it [was] necessary

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<sup>31</sup>Harrigan, *Political Change in the Metropolis*, p. 361.

<sup>32</sup>Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*, p. 206.

<sup>33</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 201-202.

<sup>34</sup>Harrigan, *Political Change in the Metropolis*, p. 31.

that properties [should] continue to be occupied by the same social and racial classes."<sup>35</sup> Federal and local agencies believed that the value of real-estate depreciated considerably when blacks moved into a neighborhood. The stigma of "color" carried with it a perception among suburbanites that blacks caused neighborhood decay and decline.

### *The Politics of Exclusion*

Throughout the first half of the twentieth century local governments managed to practice a special brand of exclusionary politics, as "public policies. . . played a central role in the development of a spatially differentiated metropolis in which blacks are separated from whites, the poor from the more affluent, [and] the disadvantaged from economic and educational opportunity. . . ."<sup>36</sup> In Newark, for example, white hostility, restrictive covenants, and zoning policies forced the black population to inhabit the city's poorest neighborhoods. While blacks suffered from residential segregation, they also faced discriminatory employment practices. The public school system had been desegregated in 1909, but the educational facilities in the ghetto were substandard. Thus, as has already been shown, this brand of exclusionary politics led to the formation of a distinct physical ghetto in Newark between 1920 and 1940.

In Arnold R. Hirsch's study of postwar Chicago, *Making the Second Ghetto*, he discussed the "process of ghetto maintenance." This process helped to perpetuate the existence of a black ghetto, while at the same time, it robbed it of its vitality by transforming the ghetto into a tragic and enduring entity. In Chicago, Hirsch explained,

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<sup>35</sup>Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*, p. 208.

<sup>36</sup>Michael Danielson, *The Politics of Exclusion* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), p. 1.

the maintenance of the black ghetto was "an act of great force" because the "preservation and expansion of Chicago's ghetto was due not to inertia but to the continuous application of old and new pressures."<sup>37</sup>

During the late 1940's and the early 1950's the old pressures included assaults first on black homes, then on blacks themselves as they tried to use public facilities, especially parks and beaches. As white Chicagoans forcefully preserved the color line, the city government and the local press downplayed its significance by treating the racial incidents as isolated occurrences and not representative of the total populace. This prompted Hirsch to label the period "an era of hidden violence."<sup>38</sup> The new pressures, nonviolent in nature, attempted to confine Chicago's black population in the ghetto by expanding and reinforcing it. Hirsch argued that after World War II "government urban redevelopment and renewal policies, as well as a massive public housing program, had a direct and enormous impact on the evolution of the ghetto. . . . such programs reshaped, enlarged, and transformed the South Side Black Belt."<sup>39</sup>

The second ghetto took shape between 1950 and 1960. During those years the demographic changes in the city signalled the expansion of the ghetto to neighborhoods contiguous to the Central Ward. As the black ghetto expanded, it also became highly concentrated. Moreover, the 1970 census documented the continued expansion of a highly concentrated black ghetto.

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<sup>37</sup> Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto*, pp. xii, 215-216.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 40-99.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

Between 1950 and 1960 seven of Newark's twelve neighborhoods displayed signs of considerable white entrenchment. The predominantly white neighborhoods -- Forest Hill-Silver Lake, North Newark, Roseville, Vailsburg, Ironbound, and Weequachic -- formed a complete ring around the core area of the city's black neighborhoods -- Central Ward, West Ward, Clinton Hill, and South Broad Street.<sup>40</sup> Throughout the period of the formation of a second ghetto, public housing policies and urban renewal programs helped to reshape and reinforce the expanding black ghetto.

### ***Public Housing***

While the FHA and VA housing policies favored the white middle class by making suburban housing affordable, the Housing Act of 1937 provided housing assistance to the central city poor, especially its racial minorities. The act allocated federal funds for local housing authorities to purchase land in blighted urban areas, tear down old buildings, construct new apartments, and rent them out at subsidized rates to lower-income people.<sup>41</sup> Initially, the black community supported public housing projects, but in the end, the construction of public housing proved disastrous, for it hastened the making of the second ghetto. In a similar vein, Kenneth T. Jackson proposed: "The result, if not the intent, of the public housing program of the United States was to segregate the races, to concentrate the disadvantaged in inner cities, and to reinforce the image of suburbia as a place of refuge for the problems of race, crime, and

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<sup>40</sup>Nathan Wright, Jr., *Ready to Riot* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1968), pp. 17-38.

<sup>41</sup>Harrigan, *Political Change in the Metropolis*, p. 31.

poverty."<sup>42</sup>

Under the provisions of the Housing Act of 1937 Newark qualified for federal assistance. By the end of World War II the Newark Housing Authority managed seven projects housing 10,204 people in 2,736 units. In 1947, the Central Planning Board prepared a master plan for Newark. The plan designated sections of the central city to be cleared and redeveloped.<sup>43</sup> The Newark Housing Authority conducted a survey of 28 Central Ward blocks to document the need for redevelopment in the worst slum area in the city. The survey revealed that 86.8 percent of the section's 3,253 dwelling units did not meet the minimum safety and health requirements under the city housing code.<sup>44</sup> Part of the 28-block area, where the majority of the city's black population resided, underwent slum clearance. Eventually, the Newark Housing Authority built four new projects on the cleared sites. By 1966 the Housing Authority operated seventeen public housing projects, including senior citizen developments, occupied by 10,531 families and 37,605 persons.<sup>45</sup> Newark had built more units of public housing per capita than any other city in the nation.

Public housing projects concentrated blacks in the inner city by segregating the projects by race. Despite the passage of an anti-discrimination law in public housing in

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<sup>42</sup>Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*, p. 219.

<sup>43</sup>Central Planning Board, *The Master Plan for the Physical Development of the City of Newark, N.J.* (Newark, N.J.: Central Planning Board, 1947), pp. 45-50.

<sup>44</sup>*Newark Evening News*, January 27, 1957.

<sup>45</sup>New Jersey Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights, *Public Housing in Newark's Central Ward*, (April, 1968), p. 14.

1950, four projects in the city were exclusively white, two projects housed white and black tenants in different buildings, one mixed project reserved a building solely for blacks, and in another racially mixed project blacks and whites lived in alternating buildings.<sup>46</sup> Excluding the housing projects for the elderly, Newark's fourteen projects still experienced considerable racial segregation in 1968. During the course of a survey of the Central Ward's public housing, James A. Kennedy, a resident of the Hayes Homes, testified: "Of these 14 developments, four of them are from 90 to 99 percent Negro, which by some strange coincidence these four developments happen to be located right here in the Central Ward."<sup>47</sup> An additional two projects had black residency rates higher than 80 percent. Four more projects were almost lily-white, they ranged from 94 to 96 percent white. Another two projects maintained white percentages higher than eighty-five.<sup>48</sup> (See Table VI). A definite pattern of residential segregation had developed, and it became increasingly clear to blacks that they had "left the segregated South for the segregated northern slums."<sup>49</sup>

A number of residents of the Central Ward spoke freely of the apparent discriminatory practices of the Newark Housing Authority. Mrs. Bernice Russell, an eleven-year resident of the Franklin D. Roosevelt Homes, claimed that she sought a

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<sup>46</sup>Newark Housing Authority, *Progress Report on Integration*, (Newark, N.J.: Newark Housing Authority, 1952).

<sup>47</sup>"Public Housing in Newark's Central Ward," p. 7.

<sup>48</sup>George Sternlieb, *Social Needs and Social Resources: Newark, 1967* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University, 1967), p. 32.

<sup>49</sup>*Newark Evening News*, December 21, 1967.

change in residence because of her son's medical problems. Mrs. Russell wished to leave the unhealthy environment of the central city and move across town to the Bradley Court project. She stated that a number of obstacles hindered her crusade to relocate:

. . . it took me three years to get into the Bradley Court. And, I was told there was a long waiting list. In three years no official could show me such a waiting list. Then when I demanded to see a waiting list, I was told, well, look, you know we can't produce this, but it is just one of those things.<sup>50</sup>

In 1966, a study on the social needs of Newark's population claimed that "public housing has provided a tremendous safety valve for the deprived of the city."<sup>51</sup> To the contrary, Newark's public housing policies assured the city's white population that the black ghetto would be reshaped and reinforced by constructing high-rise, low-income apartments on land made available through slum clearance.

### ***Urban Renewal***

Newark was among the first cities to initiate an urban renewal program.<sup>52</sup> The Newark Housing Authority wasted no time, for eighteen months after the passage of the Housing Act of 1949, the city had already announced its first slum clearance project. The Housing Authority, committed to the clearance of the city's worst slums, acted first in the North Ward; their goal was: "Middle-income housing on cleared slum sites."<sup>53</sup> The

<sup>50</sup>"Public Housing in Newark's Central Ward," pp. 6-7.

<sup>51</sup>Sternlieb, *Social Needs and Social Resources*, p. 9.

<sup>52</sup>According to John Harrigan, "Urban renewal differed from public housing in two key respects. First, unlike public housing, urban renewal allowed up to 30 percent of the cleared land to be used for commercial purposes rather than residential redevelopment. . . . A second difference. . . was the involvement of the private sector in urban renewal." Harrigan, *Political Change in the Metropolis*, p. 363.

<sup>53</sup>Harold Kaplan, *Urban Renewal Politics: Slum Clearance in Newark* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), pp. 15.

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<sup>53</sup>Harold Kaplan, *Urban Renewal Politics: Slum Clearance in Newark* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), pp. 15.

NHA chose to redevelop the North Ward because the agency hoped that private developers would be attracted to a middle-income project. The project, however, stalled for several years because the NHA could not find a private developer to build on the cleared site. Thus, the new rule became: "Find a redeveloper first, then see what interests him."<sup>54</sup> The amount of risk involved in developing the Central Ward sufficiently negated the interests of potential developers.

The NHA soon discovered that tearing down the entire ghetto in the Central Ward was next to impossible; substantial renewal, therefore, seemed to be the next best alternative. Ultimately, Central Ward renewal amounted "to the clearance of a few sites in a hard-core slum, without any attempt to alter the basic character of the slum."<sup>55</sup> The NHA's urban renewal programs did alter the nature of the ghetto, however. The modern ghetto, distinguished by high-rise apartments, replaced the old ghetto of the wooden tenement. At first, the new units provided safe, sanitary housing for a large number of the city's impoverished population, but in time the housing projects became "a pathologically congested area" and a breeding ground for the city's black poor.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>54</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 24.

<sup>55</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 19.

<sup>56</sup>Testimony of Robert Curvin, *New Jersey Governor's Select Commission on Civil Disorder - Hearings*, III, p. 75.

### III

#### *The Immigrant Experience and the Black Experience in Newark*

The immigrant experience and the black experience in Newark have been qualitatively different. While there are some similarities in their experiences, the fundamental differences are too obvious to ignore. The most significant difference between white immigrants and black ghetto dwellers has been race, for it has made the black experience unique.

Prior to the formation of a distinct ghetto in Newark between 1920 and 1940, blacks were a dispersed minority in predominantly white neighborhoods. Class, rather than race, determined one's place of residence. White hostility toward black migrants during the interwar period successfully created a black ghetto. To be sure, blacks still lived in outlying sections of the city, but the great majority of blacks lived in the city's Third Ward. In response to white hostility and ghetto formation, black leaders created an institutional ghetto which provided the black community with its own businesses, banks, churches, and secular organizations. Until 1935 the Third Ward was a vital and vibrant neighborhood.

Before World War II Newark was still an immigrant city; immigrants lived in ethnic enclaves scattered all around the city. These neighborhoods, of Irish, German, Italian, and Jewish extraction, like the black ghetto between 1920 and 1940, possessed their own institutions, organizations, and agencies. The complexity of the black and white communities during the interwar period was astonishing. Furthermore, the various neighborhoods possessed definitive community spirit which made life in the city's least

desirable sections bearable.

An interesting question, though, is what happened to the urban immigrant experience *vis a vis* the black urban experience. Most of the immigrant groups, including the Irish, German, Italian, and Jewish, managed to escape the city in increasing numbers after World War II. As blacks crowded into the ghettos, the surrounding suburbs welcomed white middle-class immigrants. Thus, the ghetto, for white immigrants, proved to be only a temporary stage in their urban experience. The National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders recognized the inherent differences in the movement of white immigrants out of the inner city as compared to blacks:

The later phases of Negro settlement and expansion in metropolitan areas diverge from those typical of white immigrants. As the whites were absorbed by the larger society, many left their predominantly ethnic neighborhoods and moved to outlying areas to obtain newer housing and better schools. Some scattered randomly over the suburban area. Others established new ethnic clusters in the suburbs. . . . Nowhere has the expansion of America's urban Negro population followed this pattern of dispersal.<sup>57</sup>

While middle-class blacks managed to infiltrate the suburban community, the black underclass suffered bitterly from the combined effect of poverty and race. One black resident of an integrated neighborhood in Newark assessed the post-World War II experience for blacks and whites in this manner:

Our block was integrated. We had everything -- Italians, Jews, Negroes, every kind of people. Before the war, we were *all* poor. As kids we wore the same kind of shoes, you know, welfare shoes. After the war everything changed. The white people made money, and moved. The black people remained poor, and stayed.<sup>58</sup>

During and after the war many of Newark's old ethnic neighborhoods underwent dramatic transformations. The Third Ward, for example, had a significant Jewish population, but

<sup>57</sup>Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, March 1, 1968 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1972), p. 119.

<sup>58</sup>Thomas R. Brooks, "Newark," *The Atlantic* (August 1969), p. 6.

as the suburbs became more accessible, that Jewish community made their mass exodus out of Newark. Philip Roth, in his novel *Goodbye, Columbus*, described the changes in the Third Ward in graphic detail:

Years ago, at the time of the great immigration, it had been a Jewish section, and still one can see the little fish stores, the kosher delicatessens, the Turkish baths. . . . Even the smells had lingered: white-fish, corned beef, sour tomatoes -- but now on top of these, was the grander greasier smell of auto wrecking shops, the sour stink of a brewery; and on the streets, instead of Yiddish, one heard Negro children playing at Willie Mays with a broom handle and half a rubber ball. The neighborhood had changed. . . .<sup>59</sup>

Many of Newark's old ethnic neighborhoods disappeared. In some areas black ghettos took their place.

The making of the second ghetto marks a tragic chapter in the history of Black Newark. The influence of white hostility, local and federal housing policies, and the prevailing racist attitudes reshaped and reinforced the black ghetto. Arnold R. Hirsch contended that the role of whites in the making of the modern ghetto was instrumental. He stated, "what we are looking at here is the construction of the ball park within which the urban game is played. And there is no question that the architects. . . were whites."<sup>60</sup> In February 1963, Vivian M. Braxton, a columnist for the *New Jersey Afro-American*, wrote an article entitled "Ghetto Game." According to Braxton, the participants in the "ghetto game" included (1) the opponents, "the largest stigmatized minority in a given city," (2) the referees, comprised of "assumingly interested local residents, many who had never lived in a slum area," and (3) the managers, or the Newark Housing Authority. Similar to Hirsch's statement, the referees and managers

<sup>59</sup>Philip Roth, *Goodbye, Columbus* (New York: Bantam Books, Inc., 1959), p.64.

<sup>60</sup>Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto*, p. xii.

determined the parameters of the "ballpark" in which the urban game was to be played. Likewise, at the end of the game, "the 'old' ghetto was maintained. . . ."<sup>61</sup>

By the mid-1960's a sense of hopelessness echoed through the city's impoverished slums. Blacks had come to Newark in search of opportunity, but they eventually became entrapped in the ghetto. Claude Brown concluded: "To add to their misery, they had little hope of deliverance. For where does one run when he's already in the promised land."<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> *New Jersey Afro American*, February 9, 1963.

<sup>62</sup> Brown, *Manchild in the Promised Land*, p. 154.

## Chapter Four

### The Road to Rebellion

On July 12, 1967 riot rocked the streets of Newark. Some predicted the riot, others expected it, while still others did not think a riot possible. Nevertheless, five rebellious days later, 23 lay dead, hundreds lay injured, and countless psychologically scarred. The final damage-to-the-city estimate exceeded \$10 million. Newark, in effect, had become two cities: one black and one white.

Eight years earlier, in 1959, the United States Civil Rights Commission had warned "against the division of society into Two Cities."<sup>1</sup> Two days after the rioting subsided Senator Charles H. Percy appeared before a Senate Committee and testified that city slums had become the "shame of our nation." The Republican senator from Illinois, in his best Lincolnian imitation, declared: "Urban America cannot survive half affluent and half destitute. Metropolitan America cannot progress divided as ghetto black and suburb white."<sup>2</sup> In 1968, President Lyndon B. Johnson's National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders concluded that the house was in the process of dividing: "Our nation

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<sup>1</sup>United States Commission on Civil Rights, *Report of the United States Commission on Civil Rights*, 1959, p. 549.

<sup>2</sup>*Newark Evening News*, July 19, 1967.

is moving toward two societies, one Black, one White -- separate and unequal."<sup>3</sup> Garry Wills, in the wake of the 1967 riots, insisted that "the imbalance of power is greater now than it was between the Union and the Confederacy." He referred to the violence of the 1960's as the Second Civil War.<sup>4</sup>

The violence of blacks in many American cities during the 1960's resulted from decades of neglect and maltreatment. The black ghetto, forged by racist and segregationist attitudes, and marked by substandard housing, unsanitary living conditions, high unemployment, poor educational facilities, and insufficient social services, made life for blacks in the nation's urban centers overwhelmingly difficult. The environment cultivated by the ghetto planted the seeds of discontent in the black community. The United States, by virtue of the way its black and white populations lived, was a divided society. A house divided against itself cannot stand.

## I

### Ghetto Politics

During the pre-World War I migration of blacks to Newark, the early black community was politically a non-entity. In fact, many people called the small-time black politicos "little peanut politicians," for their influence and power was minimal.<sup>5</sup> During the interwar years, though, the black community became active in politics. The Urban

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<sup>3</sup>United States National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, *Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders*, 1968, p. 1.

<sup>4</sup>Garry Wills, *The Second Civil War: Arming for Armageddon* (New York: The New American Library, Inc., 1968), p. 23.

<sup>5</sup>Ashby, "Reflections of on the Life of Negroes in Newark," p. 17.

League and the local chapter of the NAACP, as well as a number of interracial organizations, led blacks in a drive to desegregate the city. These organizations advocated racial advancement through a gradual and cooperative strategy. Change came slowly, and only after considerable cooperation with liberal whites in the city. The black leadership, as described by Robert Curvin, "usually chose to work behind the scenes, cooperating with whites rather than by opposing or publicly criticizing them, or at least accepting a gradual pace of change."<sup>6</sup> The middle-class leaders of the NAACP, the Urban League, and interracial committees avoided controversy at all costs. When conflict did arise, the black leadership quietly backed down.

Between 1917 and 1953 the city commission form of government dictated the flow of power in Newark. The commission became an appendage of political corruption, patronage, and graft. A brand of machine politics predominated, reminiscent of Boss Tweed's reign over Tammany Hall in New York City, in which ethnic "bosses" decided who would receive appointments, jobs, and favors. The *New Jersey Afro-American* contended that the commission did not represent the black community, and, in fact, it had "kept colored citizens in Newark in the status of second class citizens ever since its inception."<sup>7</sup>

To reduce the potential for political corruption, the city adopted a mayor-council form of government which established a nine-member city council and strong mayoral powers. Four members of the council received at-large nominations while the remaining

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<sup>6</sup>Curvin, "Black Ghetto Politics in Newark," p. 147.

<sup>7</sup>*New Jersey Afro-American*, October 21, 1953.

councilmen were elected from each of the city's five wards. Under this new system the black population, previously excluded from municipal politics in Newark, was now in a position to elect its own representative. "For its purposeful and successful struggle to better its government" the National Municipal League and *Look* magazine named Newark an "All-American City."<sup>8</sup>

In May 1954, in the city's first election under its new charter, Irvine I. Turner -- a Newark-born, southern-educated, black newspaperman -- was elected to the City Council as the representative of the predominantly black Central Ward. Turner soon became the best-known black in all of Newark as his pro-black rhetoric and charismatic personality endeared him to his black constituency. At times, Turner, unlike the moderate black leaders of the NAACP and the Urban League, openly criticized the white establishment. He also lashed out at the city's profiteering slumlords calling them "cheap law violating beasts who have the nerve to go overboard on their greed for money at the expense of poor citizens."<sup>9</sup>

Irvine Turner, the champion of the Central Ward's black poor, controlled the distribution of political jobs and favors in the city's black ghetto. He, like old-time ward bosses, possessed a great deal of power among his constituents. John O'Shea, in a special to the *Atlantic Monthly*, described the black councilman's particular brand of politics:

Turner, who controls about 17,000 votes, practices a personal, bread and butter kind of politics in the classic tradition of the American ward boss. . . . He boasts that he feeds more Negroes every week than the Newark welfare department. . . . Turner also controls dozens

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<sup>8</sup>The City of Newark, New Jersey: Municipal Council of Newark, New Jersey, *Report to the People (1954-1961)*, 1961. p. 1.

<sup>9</sup>Curvin, "Black Ghetto Politics in Newark," p. 155.

of patronage jobs paying thousands of dollars annually.<sup>10</sup>

While Turner wielded power at the ward level, he was not as influential on the city-wide level. Despite Turner's fiery and combative style, he was far too eager to appease his superiors and adhere to his party's deep-rooted tradition of partisan politics. According to Robert Curvin, Turner's personal politics mirrored the cooperative approach advanced by the NAACP and the Urban League:

He helped soothe, co-opt, or challenge any opposition to the white leaders to whom he was loyal. It was not that Turner avoided issues that would embarrass the political leaders or challenge the status quo; rather, after the issues were raised, he made no organized effort to insure that they were discussed or acted upon.<sup>11</sup>

The election of a black official to the City Council, therefore, was a minor victory because it had little effect on the prominent social and economic issues in the city.

By 1960 the black population accounted for 34.2 percent of Newark's total population. As the black population continued to grow, the black vote became more of a force in city-wide elections. In fact, in 1962, when the black community found the current mayor, Leo P. Carlin, unresponsive and apathetic to its needs, it vowed to use its vote accordingly in the next election. In the spring of 1962, Congressman Hugh J. Addonizio, the challenger to Carlin's mayoralty, made several campaign promises pledging his assistance to the city's downtrodden and underprivileged poor. To a large extent this was a direct appeal to the city's black people. In his days in Washington, Addonizio had been dubbed "the Negro's Congressman," since liberals, both black and

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<sup>10</sup> Atlantic Monthly, December 1965, cited in Ron Porambo, *No Cause for Indictment: An Autopsy of Newark* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971), pp. 80-81.

<sup>11</sup> Robert Curvin, *The Persistent Minority: The Black Political Experience in Newark* (Ph.D. dissertation, Princeton University, 1975), p. 36.

white, believed he was genuinely interested in the plight of blacks.<sup>12</sup>

During the mayoral campaign Addonizio accused Carlin of being unavailable at City Hall. The Congressman specifically charged the Mayor with neglect for "the little people," while only "a privileged few found a convenient backdoor to City Hall." Addonizio promised the voters: "You will be able to see me face to face. You can come in the front door. The back door for special interests will be closed and sealed."<sup>13</sup> Addonizio also swore to curb police brutality, hire blacks for city jobs, and strengthen the Mayor's Commission on Civil Rights.<sup>14</sup> Based on his past reputation and present promises, Addonizio appeared to be Black Newark's "Great White Hope."

In May 1962, Addonizio easily defeated Carlin by carrying every ward in the city, not surprisingly he outpolled the former mayor two-to-one in the predominantly black Central Ward. In his inaugural speech, the new mayor pledged an aggressive attack on the problems of concern to the city blacks, including housing, employment and education.<sup>15</sup> Toward the end of his address, Addonizio stated: "For too long Newark had been a sleeping giant with potential unmatched, with a desire unparalleled and with opportunity unlimited."<sup>16</sup> The same could be said, however, about Newark's black community.

<sup>12</sup>*Report for Action*, p. 7.

<sup>13</sup> *New Jersey Afro-American*, February 1, 1964; Tom Hayden, *Rebellion in Newark: Official Violence and Ghetto Response* (New York: Random House Books, Inc., 1967), p. 7.

<sup>14</sup>*Newark Evening News*, March 16, 1962; March 18, 1962.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, July 2, 1962.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*

***II*****The Civil Rights Movement?**

Mayor Hugh Addonizio did not become the "Negro's Mayor," though, for his performance never even approached his promise. Under Addonizio, the city government reverted to the corrupt machine politics of old.<sup>17</sup> City Hall once again became a forum for special interests, corruption, and patronage. But while Newark regressed, the national government forged boldly ahead. During the Kennedy years, "the best and the brightest" pledged to eliminate housing discrimination "with a stroke of the pen" and to initiate programs combating poverty and inequality.<sup>18</sup> After John F. Kennedy's assassination, Lyndon B. Johnson told his staff that civil rights leaders would have to wear sneakers in order to keep up with his civil rights legislation.<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, he vowed to wage war on poverty.

Mayor Addonizio took office at the time when the national civil rights movement

<sup>17</sup>There was a widespread belief that Newark's government was corrupt. According to the Governor's Commission, a source close to Newark businessmen said he understood from them that "everything at City Hall is for sale." Other officials described the state of affairs in this manner: "There's a price on everything at City Hall." Gambling rackets were condoned by city officials and policeman. Administration costs skyrocketed as City Councilmen raised their take-home pay to \$10,000 and enjoyed annual trips to Atlantic City at the taxpayer's expense. Mayor Addonizio installed air-conditioning and wall-to-wall carpeting in his office. He also purchased a new fish tail Cadillac. In fact, Mayor Addonizio once remarked, "There's no money in being a congressman but you can make a million bucks as mayor of Newark." See *Report For Action*, pp. 20-21; *New Jersey Afro-American*, March 21, 1964; and Porambo, *No Cause for Indictment*, pp. 60-63.

<sup>18</sup>David Halberstam, *The Best and The Brightest* (Greenwich, Connecticut: Fawcett Publications, Inc., 1969).

<sup>19</sup>Allen J. Matusow, *The Unraveling of America: A History of the Liberalism of the 1960's* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1984), p. 216.

was gaining a great deal of momentum. Civil rights activists mobilized around the strength of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s non-violent leadership. In 1960, student sit-ins began in earnest throughout the South. The following year, James Farmer, national director of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), protested Jim Crow practices in the South, as blacks were still forced to sit in the back of interstate buses in that region of the country. Likewise, waiting rooms, lavatories, and terminal restaurants maintained a "whites only" policy. Indignant over segregation, Farmer and CORE members called for "freedom riders" to challenge Jim Crow practices on interstate buslines. In 1963, George C. Wallace, the newly elected governor of Alabama, pledged "segregation now . . . segregation tomorrow. . . segregation forever," and in Birmingham, Bull Connor, along with his dogs and hoses, vowed to defend it. During the same year blacks marched on the nation's capitol demanding redress of century-old wrongs.<sup>20</sup>

Against this backdrop, Newark's response to the civil rights movement was curious indeed, for while the nation moved forward, Newark lagged behind. There continued to be a general consensus in the city that the races could co-exist harmoniously; many considered Newark a melting pot rather than a swirling pool of hatred. In addition, the black middle class, distinguished by its moderate and cooperative strategies, did not provide enough leadership for a civil rights campaign to make a notable impact. To be sure, small victories were won, but they did not translate into lasting change. Ultimately, the civil rights movement bypassed Newark because the movement did not politicize its

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<sup>20</sup>For discussion of the civil rights movement in the United States between 1960 and 1963 see: Henry Hampton and Steve Fayer, eds., *Voices of Freedom: An Oral History of the Civil Rights Movement From the 1950's Through the 1980's* (New York: Bantam Books, 1990), pp. 53-176.

black community. The critical years in the politicization of the black community, then, were those between 1965 and 1967. A series of catalytic events, including the near election of a black mayor in 1966, fostered a growing sense of self-determination among the city's blacks.

Donald Malafronte, Mayor Addonizio's administrative assistant, proclaimed that "Newark was not a red hot civil rights town."<sup>21</sup> As noted above, the major obstacle to a successful civil rights drive in Newark was the lack of substantial black leadership. While the black underclass became entrapped in the second ghetto between 1940 and 1967, the black middle class began to leave the city. During the decade between 1950 and 1960 the total black population of Essex County increased by approximately 75,000. While 63,000 of the 75,000 new black arrivals settled in Newark, some 12,000 lived outside the city in its surrounding suburbs. Montclair and Orange, as well as other towns adjacent to Newark, now accepted blacks in their neighborhoods. Those who could afford to move left the "economically and socially depressed areas to [move to] better neighborhoods where they and their children [could] have the opportunity to lead a better life."<sup>22</sup> The departure of the black middle-class from Newark could not have come at a worse time. The black underclass needed the guidance and stability offered by a strong and active black middle class.

In August 1963, Reverend Theodore M. Booth of St. John's Methodist Church in

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<sup>21</sup>*New Jersey Governor's Select Commission on Civil Disorder - Hearings*, IV, p. 16.

<sup>22</sup>United States Bureau of Labor Statistics Report No. 332, "Social and Economic Conditions of Negroes in the United States," October 1967, cited in Wright, Jr., *Ready to Riot*, p. 60.

Newark inquired, "Where and who are Newark's Colored leaders?"<sup>23</sup> Another black resident added: "Promising young men with leadership ability are in short supply in our town's political and civil rights movement."<sup>24</sup> While many middle-class black leaders retreated to the suburbs, the majority of those who remained in Newark did not devote all their energies to the civil rights cause. Business and government often lured potential black leaders away from civil rights activities by offering them lucrative jobs.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, black social workers, ministers, lawyers, teachers, and businessmen who had dedicated some of their time to the rights movement "retire[d] from the [civil rights] battleground" before they had achieved victory.<sup>26</sup> As late as April 1964 the *New Jersey Afro-American* charged that "the civil rights movement in Newark needs some sort of transfusion with new blood if it isn't to fizzle out into nothingness real soon."<sup>27</sup>

The most powerful black organization in Newark, the NAACP, did not provide suitable direction either. Marred by political in-fighting, the Newark NAACP, allied itself with the city's administration and advocated a moderate approach toward racial advancement. Some black citizens, disgusted with decades of moderation, thought that more militant action was necessary. They questioned the competence of the Newark

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*, August 17, 1963.

<sup>24</sup>*New Jersey Afro-American*, December 28, 1963.

<sup>25</sup>The black community became disgruntled over the fact that black appointees had been rendered powerless in the Addonizio administration. After only a short period in office, a handful of black staff appointees resigned as they came to realize that they were mere figureheads providing "window dressing" for the administration. *Report for Action*, pp. 7-8, 16.

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*, April 18, 1964.

NAACP in a time when racial progress was being made around the country: "In the past few years there have been protests in almost every major city in the nation except Newark. The citizens are asking why? What is wrong with our branch of the NAACP?"<sup>28</sup>

The moderate black leadership lost touch with the black masses. Black leaders, often privy to city decisions affecting the city's black community, were more in tune with City Hall than the black ghetto. For example, old-line black politicos like Irvine Turner and Carlton B. Norris, head of the Newark NAACP, usually allied themselves with the Addonizio administration. *The New Jersey Afro-American* condemned such allegiances, saying, "leaders... cannot afford to be closely identified with the sources of much of the inequality and discrimination from which they suffer."<sup>29</sup> Many blacks in Newark believed that the NAACP had been used by black leaders to gain political appointment. One civil rights activist observed: "No one's going to bite the hand that feeds him. So long as political and government appointees... hold the top positions in the Newark NAACP, then so long will there be little noise and pressure from that quarter."<sup>30</sup> From its conception the NAACP had been a bourgeois organization; it was unresponsive to the needs of the black underclass.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>28</sup>*Ibid.*, May 2, 1964.

<sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*, June 1, 1963.

<sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*, May 9, 1964.

<sup>31</sup>According to one account, the Newark branch of the NAACP was comprised of "well-intentioned moderates who were more concerned about not stepping on someone's toes than about making progress toward freedom." *Ibid.*, June 1, 1963.

Even though the lack of leadership inhibited the success of large-scale change in Newark, a number of important victories had been won. In 1961, the Clinton Hill Neighborhood Council supported a lawsuit brought by seven individuals to stop the Clinton Hill Renewal Project because blacks and whites did not want to be uprooted from their homes.<sup>32</sup> In 1963, CORE organized a five-day demonstration at Barringer High, an almost exclusively black school, protesting all-white construction crews.<sup>33</sup> In the same year, rights leaders managed to block a petition by the city's police department to install a K-9 corps. In addition, black Newarkers participated in national movements as well. They sympathized with their brethren from the South; some 1,000 blacks boarded trains at Newark's Penn Station to travel to the nation's capitol for the March on Washington.

Tom Hayden, one of the founders of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), came to Newark during the summer of 1964 and initiated the Newark Community Union Project (NCUP). The aim of this group was "to put into practice the theory and method of participatory democracy and to organize ghetto people to take some control over their own and their children's lives. . . ."<sup>34</sup> This approach seemed to be gaining influence in the community. One SDS member wrote in *Liberation* magazine: "A ghetto is not a bad place to live because its residents are all Negroes or because most of them are poor. What makes a ghetto despicable -- and what keeps it that way -- is that the people in it

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<sup>32</sup>Report for Action, p.9.

<sup>33</sup>Newark Evening News, July 17, 1963.

<sup>34</sup>Porambo, *No Cause for Indictment*, p.79.

have no control over the decisions that affect their lives.<sup>35</sup> Hayden's group concentrated on demonstrations and litigation against profiteering slumlords. SDS and NCUP picketed in front of run-down tenements, distributed leaflets charging police with brutality, and called for continued demonstrations against substandard housing.

Yet during the "Long, Hot Summer of 1964" when major violence erupted in many Northeastern cities (Harlem, the Bedford-Stuyvesant section of Brooklyn, Rochester, and Philadelphia), Newark remained silent. "Why didn't Newark riot?" was the question most often asked around the city. In the wake of the Harlem riots a rally had been planned by some black community leaders to take place in Newark's Central Ward. Some black leaders and the city government feared that this rally would erupt into a Harlem-like riot. On the verge of riot, the black community was implored by civil rights, civic, and religious leaders to remain peaceful. These peoples' efforts were successful, temporarily.<sup>36</sup>

### III

#### The Critical Years, 1965-1967

Between 1965 and 1967 the mounting frustration and dissatisfaction of the black community reached a boiling point. Police brutality toward blacks -- a long standing complaint of the black community -- spiraled out of control. City government continued to ignore the demands of the black community. The struggle over an appointment of a black candidate to the Newark's Board of Education and the debate over the construction

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<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.*, p.80.

<sup>36</sup>*New Jersey Afro-American*, August 1, 1964.

of a medical school in the city's Central Ward radicalized the black community. After being denied equal voice once again, the black community was ready to riot.

### *Police-Community Relations, 1965*

Two incidents involving members of Newark's black community and the Newark Police Department during the summer of 1965 signalled that race relations were reaching an all-time low. In the early morning hours of June 12, 1965, Lester Long, Jr. was pulled over by Newark policeman for having a broken tail light and a noisy muffler. After being detained 45 minutes, Long decided to flee from custody. As he ran from the patrol car, he was gunned down by Officer Henry Martinez's .38 caliber pistol. The police immediately stated that Martinez's gun was fired by accident. However, witnesses came forward to provide evidence to the contrary. Multiple witnesses stated that Officer Martinez had deliberately set his sights on Lester Long and had fired his weapon knowingly. The police changed their official report amidst cries of brutality from the black community.<sup>37</sup>

In August of the same year, Bernard Rich died in a Newark jail cell. Police reports stated that Rich had gone berserk and killed himself by banging his head against the jail cell walls. However, a pathologist's report indicated that Rich had sustained severe bruises on various parts of his body.<sup>38</sup> These bruises were hardly self-inflicted.

These incidents bolstered the widespread conviction that communication between

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<sup>37</sup> Porambo, *No Cause for Indictment*, pp. 40-46.

<sup>38</sup> Wright, Jr., *Ready to Riot*, p. 5.

the black community and the Newark Police Department had broken down. The racial composition of the force was overwhelmingly white. There were only 145 blacks and one Puerto Rican in a department of 1,512 men, serving a city in which over fifty percent of the population was black and ten percent Spanish-speaking.<sup>39</sup> There were frequent charges of police brutality, yet not one officer was convicted of using excessive force against a citizen during the racially sensitive period between 1965-1967.<sup>40</sup>

According to *The New York Times*, at the prodding of civil rights activists, much of the "population saw the struggle not in terms of police versus criminal but of police versus community or police versus minority groups."<sup>41</sup> The Committee of Concern, a Newark citizens group, suggested, "A large segment of the Negro population is convinced that the single most lawless element operating in the community is the police force itself in the callous disregard for human rights."<sup>42</sup>

### *The State of the City*

Police-community relations were not the only problem in Newark. According to Newark's Model Cities application for federal funds, the city's situation? This excerpt from the application explains the dilemma as seen by city officials:

Decay, poverty and the problems of racial transition are common to most older cities, especially in the Northeast. However, there are few cities anywhere in the nation where these and other urban problems extend so widely and cut so deeply as in Newark, New Jersey. Among major American cities, Newark and its citizens face the highest percentage of substandard housing, the most crime per 100,000 of population and the highest rate of

<sup>39</sup>Report for Action, p. 24.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., pp. 30-36.

<sup>41</sup>New York Times, January 10, 1966.

<sup>42</sup>Amsterdam News, July 22, 1967.

venereal disease, new cases of tuberculosis and maternal mortality. In addition, Newark is second among major cities in population density, second in infant mortality, second in birth rate, seventh in absolute number of drug addicts and has a rate of unemployment persistent enough and high enough to make it one of only five cities in the nation qualified for special assistance under the Economic Development Act.<sup>43</sup>

An incident in a predominantly black school perhaps did more to capture the frustration of the black population than any government report could ever do. A black pupil read the first line of the day's lesson aloud: "The people of Africa are not white like we are."<sup>44</sup>

### Kenneth Gibson - 1966 Mayoral Campaign

The mayoral campaign of 1966 was a significant turning point for the black community. Kenneth Gibson, a black candidate and late entry into the 1966 mayoral campaign, received substantial support from the black community. Although Newark's citizens elected Hugh Addonizio for a second term, Ken Gibson garnered over 17,000 votes and finished third behind former mayor Leo P. Carlin. In defeat Gibson claimed victory, saying: "For the first time in the history of the city an independent political force has been created. . . the people in this city demonstrated they didn't want to be taken for granted."<sup>45</sup> In retrospect, it is clear that the campaign of 1966 was one of the crucial forces that provided the black community in Newark with a greater sense of hope for self-determination.

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<sup>43</sup>The City of Newark, New Jersey: Newark Model Cities application, 1967, pp. 1-2, available at the Newark Public Library.

<sup>44</sup>*Newark Evening News*, December 22, 1967.

<sup>45</sup>*Newark Evening News*, May 11, 1966.

## IV

### Catalytic Events

It took a series of events beginning in the early part of 1967 to bring Newark to the brink of riot. In 1966, the College of Medicine and Dentistry decided to leave Jersey City. The Addonizio Administration expressed interest in having the school relocate in Newark. Not only would the school bring new jobs, but it would dramatically improve Newark's worsening health care system. However, the school's trustees wanted to move the college to Madison, a suburban town 20 miles to the west, where there would be more room. The trustees, under pressure from Newark and the Essex County Legislature, declared Newark acceptable if they were to receive 150 acres of land.<sup>46</sup> By stating this condition, the college was attempting in reality to make a move to Newark impossible. However, City Hall responded by offering more than 150 acres of urban renewal land in the city's Central Ward.

The college trustees countered by insisting that the first fifty acres come from a largely built up area in which thousands of impoverished families were living. Addonizio decided that this would not be a problem; the city would condemn the land, relocate the people, and give the property to the medical school.<sup>47</sup> The key mistake may have been the failure of city officials to consult the citizens of the area. The black community again felt that they were a non-entity who had matters of importance decided for them. Politically, they had no voice with which they could speak to defend their vital interests.

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<sup>46</sup> Winters, ed., *From Riot to Recovery*, p. 47.

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<sup>47</sup>Cunningham, *Newark*, pp. 315-317.

The second controversy, the Parker-Callaghan dispute, came quickly upon the heels of the medical school debacle. Arnold Hess, the secretary of the Board of Education, planned to resign in the spring, and the mayor wished to replace him with Councilman James T. Callaghan. The black community supported City Budget Director Wilbur Parker for the post. Parker, the first black certified public accountant in New Jersey, had earned a master's degree in accounting at Cornell University; Callaghan by contrast had never attended college. Parker was without question the more qualified candidate, but the mayor persisted in his support of the councilman. Civil rights activists again charged that the city was imposing decisions on the black community without their input and with little regard for their feelings.

The Board of Education deferred a decision on the appointment, and on May 29, Fred Means, acting president of the Negro Educators of Newark, said: "The Negro community is in turmoil over this injustice. If immediate steps are not taken, Newark might become another Watts."<sup>48</sup> Albert Black observed: "Never before has there been an issue that has so disturbed and split the community of Newark."<sup>49</sup> In 1987, Sally G. Carrol, president of the Newark NAACP during the time of the riots, remembered the Board of Education appointment as the issue that energized the black community:

The Parker-Callaghan thing is what sticks in my memory most. The community was really so outraged that a man who was as qualified as Wilbur Parker would be passed over. It was as if the city was saying, 'Hey, well, you might be qualified, but you're black.'<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> *Newark Evening News*, May 29, 1967.

<sup>49</sup> *Newark Star-Ledger*, July 14, 1967.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, July 14, 1987.

Harry Wheeler, a Newark school teacher, emphatically stated at one of the hearings that "the Callaghan appointment is going to be the catalyst for blood running in the streets of Newark like there has never been anywhere else in America. . . a blood bath here that will put the pogroms[sic] of Poland to shame."<sup>51</sup>

Arnold Hess, the incumbent secretary, de-fused the conflict when he reversed himself by deciding not to resign for another year. Yet this incident could not be erased from the memory of the black community. Newark Police Director Dominic Spina reflected:

As you sit in the office of the Police Director and you see these swirling movements surrounding you you will note that they grow in crescendo. You will note that the speeches get more and more violent. For example, the type of speeches that were made before the Planning Board and the Board of Education. You realize that the climate is being set for the kind of wholesale protest and hostility.<sup>52</sup>

The present situation demonstrated a polarization of attitudes. According to the *Report for Action*: "Attitudinally, whites and blacks are in two almost separate worlds. On many issues related to the future relations between the two groups, Negroes and whites hold almost diametrically opposed views."<sup>53</sup> Frustration mounted as blacks realized that Newark possessed a political system that did not meet their needs, an educational system which did not educate them, a welfare system which kept the recipient at or below the sustenance level, an unbearable housing situation, a white police department which had

<sup>51</sup> *Newark Evening News*, July 19, 1967.

<sup>52</sup> *New Jersey Governor's Select Commission on Civil Disorder-Hearings*, V, p.105.

<sup>53</sup> *Report For Action*, p. 2.

a reputation for brutality, and a mayor who promised one thing and delivered another.<sup>54</sup>

The events of early 1967 brought the frustration of the black community out into the open. The fact that the two issues ran concurrently helped to focus discontent and dissatisfaction. Albert Black once described the city's Central Ward as "the rotten casket destined for the burial of the living dead."<sup>55</sup> By now, many people believed that a riot could not be avoided; it was only a matter of time before the city's "powderkeg" exploded.

On July 13, blacks residents of the Hayes housing project witnessed the brutal beating of a Newark cab driver. According to Tom Hayden: "As if to prove its inevitability, the Newark riot began with an ordinary police-brutality incident against a man with an ordinary name: John Smith. . ."<sup>56</sup> Smith was dragged from a police car into the Fourth Precinct after resisting arrest for the violation of "tailgating." Residents of the Hayes Homes, one of Newark's rat-infested slum buildings, began to congregate around the Fourth Precinct door protesting the police's brutal act. A crowd of 200 grew more and more violent as attempts by civil rights leaders to pacify the crowd failed. Out of the dark shadows of the housing project came a shower of rocks and bricks followed by Molotov cocktails. The riot was on.

On July 14 Mayor Addonizio contended that the events of the night before were "isolated incidents." Yet that evening brought thousands of rioters out into the streets.

<sup>54</sup> John J. Funston, Jr., *The Making of the Mayor of Newark, 1970*, Ph.D. dissertation, Glassboro State College, 1972, p.21.

<sup>55</sup> Wright, Jr., *Ready To Riot*, p. 39.

<sup>56</sup> Hayden, *Rebellion in Newark*, p. 9.

The active mob, according to first-hand observers, was more jubilant than angry. Rioters gleefully smashed store windows and stole clothing, food, TV sets, radios, toys and anything else they could get their hands on. Governor Richard T. Hughes appeared on the riot-torn scene and commented: "The thing that repels me is the holiday atmosphere I saw with my own eyes. Its like laughing at your own funeral."<sup>57</sup>

In the summer of 1966 Mayor Hugh Addonizio congratulated the efforts of the City of Newark and its citizens: "Newark has proved to the nation we can live together in harmony and peace from the tragic riots that have shattered so much of our sisters cities."<sup>58</sup> The myth that the City of Newark was incapable of riot had been shattered.

The black community had finally reached the point of self-determination. A young black man, referring to himself as Brother Theodore, expressed the joy and hope of the moment.

I'm glad we're waking up at last. . . . This is a joyous occasion, my brother, this is an awakening. . . because of this demonstration we will now have more opportunities. There will be jobs now and better places to live, you'll see. This is the sound the white man waited to hear. We have brought it to him.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>57</sup>*New York Daily News*, July 15, 1967.

<sup>58</sup>*New York Daily News*, July 19, 1967.

<sup>59</sup>*Amsterdam News*, July 22, 1967.

## **Conclusion**

### **The City of Newark: From Riot to Renaissance?**

Between 1917 and 1967 the black community in Newark has experienced the bitterness of racism and discrimination; the sting of poverty and unemployment; and the injustice of substandard housing and inadequate health care. Many of the legacies of the pre-riot black community are still prevalent today. But some progress has been made as well.

The City of Newark still thrives on positive rhetoric, for the city has now assumed the sobriquet, "The Renaissance City." Newark's move from riot to renaissance has been marked by a new construction boom in the downtown business district. The built environment has expanded and developed at such a rate that it is hard to turn a downtown street-corner without being confronted by some kind of new construction. Businesses are returning for the first time since the riots, as they once again see the virtues of conducting business in Newark. The convenient location of the Newark Airport has lured many major airline contracts away from more remote New York's airports.<sup>1</sup> A new arts center has been planned for completion by 1994 signalling a return of high culture to the city.

The city has experienced a number of small victories, too. The low-income, high-rise apartment buildings erected by the Newark Housing Authority in the postwar era have

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<sup>1</sup>*New York Times*, October 9, 1990.

proved an unqualified failure. In 1985 a row of the thirteen-story Scudder Homes in the city's Central Ward were demolished, and in 1990 the NHA closed the Columbus Homes, another abandoned high-rise complex.<sup>2</sup> In the meantime, new townhouses have been constructed. A number of crusaders have surfaced in the city's Central Ward attempting to resurrect the "rotten casket." Father William Linder, a Catholic priest, has been ministering to the people of the Central Ward for the last twenty-seven years. After the riots Linder recognized that proper housing was a necessity for decent living. Since 1967, the priest and black residents from the Central Ward have formed the New Community Corporation. The organization has built over 2,400 apartments in a 22-block area in the black ghetto. In addition, in the summer of 1990 the Central Ward received its first supermarket since the riots. Residents no longer have to submit to gouging grocers or travel to other towns to find decent food prices.<sup>3</sup>

The signs of change are encouraging, but Newark still suffers from significant urban decay. Two recent studies undermind the progress that Newark has made since the riots. In 1986 a survey of urban black dwellers concluded that Newark was one of the five worts economic communities for American blacks. The City of Newark possessed the widest margin margin between black and white median income as well as the greatest percentage point difference between black and white home ownership.<sup>4</sup> A study conducted by the University of Chicago found that Newark was among the nation's most

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<sup>2</sup>Cunningham, *Newark*, pp. 366-367; *The Star-Ledger*, October 4, 1990.

<sup>3</sup>*The Star-Ledger*, July 27, 1990.

<sup>4</sup>*The Star-Ledger*, June 20, 1986.

highly segregated cities.<sup>5</sup> The strength of the second ghetto has proven formidable. Hopefully, it will not always define the existance of Black Newark.

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<sup>5</sup>*New York Times*, August 5, 1989; *The Star-Ledger*, September 18, 1989.

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